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Three Masters

Balzac, Dickens, Dostoeffsky

STEFAN ZWEIG

Three Masters

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THREE MASTERS

Balzac • Dickens • Dostoeffsky

MASTER BUILDERS

An Attempt at the Typology of the Spirit

BY STEFAN ZWEIG

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VOLUME ONE

THREE MASTERS:
BALZAC – DICKENS – DOSTOEFFSKY

(The German original, *Drei Meister*, was published in 1919. The English version will be published shortly.)

•

VOLUME TWO

THE STRUGGLE WITH THE DAIMON:
HÖLDERLIN – KLEIST – NIETZSCHE

(The German original, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon*, was published in 1925. The English version will be published in due course.)

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VOLUME THREE

ADEPTS IN SELF-PORTRAITURE:
CASANOVA – STENDHAL – TOLSTOY

(The German original, *Drei Dichter ihres Lebens*, was published in 1928.)

THREE MASTERS

Balzac • Dickens • Dostoeffsky

BY STEFAN ZWEIG

Translated from the German
by EDEN and CEDAR PAUL

LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD.
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DREI MEISTER

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FIRST PUBLISHED IN GREAT BRITAIN 1930

Printed in U. S. A.

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4-28-94

TO

ROMAIN ROLLAND

IN GRATITUDE

FOR HIS LOYAL FRIENDSHIP

THROUGH BRIGHT AND GLOOMY DAYS

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INTRODUCTION

The three essays which comprise this book were penned at various times in the course of ten years. Yet though they were composed at fairly long intervals, it is in no fit of caprice on the part of the author that they are assembled under one cover. A conviction of their essential uniformity has prompted him to bring these three greatest novelists of the nineteenth century together; to show them as types which, for the very reason that they contrast each with the others, also complete one another in a way which makes them combine to round off our concept of the epic portrayers of the world, the writers of romances.

When I say that I consider Balzac, Dickens, and Dostoeffsky the supremely great novelists of the nineteenth century, it must not be thought that I am casting a slur on the achievements of Goethe, Gottfried Keller, Stendhal, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Thackeray, Victor Hugo, and many others. From the works of each of these distinguished men you may select a novel and tell me, with good reason, that it excels any single work of my chosen trio—or at any rate any single work by Balzac or Dickens. But this brings me to the distinction I wish to draw between the writer of one (perhaps even more than one) outstanding novel, and what I term a true novelist—an epic master, the creator of an almost unending series of pre-eminent romances. The novelist in this higher sense is endowed with encyclopedic genius, is a universal artist, who constructs a cosmos, peopling it with types of his own making, giving it laws of

gravitation that apply to it alone, and a starry firmament adorned with planets and constellations. Each figure, each happening, in such a world will be so impressed with the author's personality, that they not only become typical for him but for us likewise. Indeed, he impregnates characters and things so strongly with his personality, and makes them so amazingly alive, that we come to speak of individuals in the real world as "a Balzac figure," "a Dickens type," "a Dostoeffsky nature." These artists build up a law of life and a concept of life by means of the characters in their books, so that we get a picture of a united whole, and are given a vision of a new kind of world. My aim in the present study is to lay bare the hidden uniformity of these laws and character formations, and thus to portray "The Psychology of the Novelist." Indeed, the last five words might well have served as sub-title to my book.

Each of the novelists I have chosen has created his own sphere: Balzac, the world of society; Dickens, the world of the family; Dostoeffsky, the world of the One and of the All. A comparison of these spheres only serves to prove their differences. But it has not been my intention to put a valuation on the differences, or to emphasize the national element in the artist, whether in a spirit of sympathy or antipathy. Every great creator is a unity in himself, a unity with its own boundaries and its own specific gravity. And there is only one specific gravity possible within a single work, and no absolute criterion in the scales of justice.

I take it for granted that the reader is familiar with the writings of the three artists dealt with in this book. My essays are not meant as an introduction but as a sublimation, a condensation, an essence. They are concerned only with what I personally deem indispensable. I regret having to be so concise, more especially in the case of Dostoeffsky,

for here, as with Goethe, the proportions of the man are so vast that even the widest latitude of depiction proves inadequate to the task.

I should gladly have added to these great figures (one a Frenchman, one an Englishman, and one a Russian) the study of a representative German novelist, worthy of the name in the sense I have just explained. But I regret to say I have found none, either in our own time or in the past, who is entitled to take his place beside the present trio. Do I presume too much in the hope that *Three Masters* may help to evoke a fourth from the womb of the coming time—a German master novelist whose birth I thus greet from afar?

Salzburg, 1919.

BALZAC

(1799–1850)

I announce a life that shall be copious,
vehement, spiritual, bold. . . .

WALT WHITMAN

PLASTIC YEARS

Balzac was born at Tours in 1799. He was, therefore, a native of a bountiful province where Rabelais too had found a cheerful home. May 20, 1799; mark well the date! For in the autumn of that same year Napoleon (whom a world already disquieted by his exploits still called Bonaparte) returned from his Egyptian campaign, half victor and half fugitive. He had fought under foreign skies, the pyramids being the stony witnesses of his prowess; then, abandoning his grandiose schemes for Egypt's betterment, he turned back to the country of his adoption. Setting sail in a little vessel, he eluded Nelson's watchful eyes, and landed at Fréjus on October ninth. Very soon he was able to gather a handful of trusty followers; he cleared out the Directory and the Councils, and at one blow became the leading power in France. Thus, the year of Balzac's birth was likewise the year when the man who was to found the First Empire made a great stride forward on his path. The new century was no longer to speak of "le petit général"; the "Corsican adventurer" was to be forgotten; soon Bonaparte was to be known as Napoleon, the Emperor of the French. For fifteen years (the years of Balzac's boyhood) Napoleon's mighty hands were to hold half Europe in their grip, while his ambitious dreams embraced the world, from the west to the far east, in the orbit of his empire.

To a contemporary of Napoleon, and more especially to a man of Balzac's disposition, it could not be a matter of

indifference that the first sixteen years of his life should have coincided with those of the Consulate and the Empire, perhaps the most fantastical epoch in the world's history. Early experiences, and that strange thing we speak of as destiny, what are they but the inner and the outer, the subjective and the objective, aspects of the same phenomenon? How could the momentous experiences of the time fail to influence a mind of Balzac's calibre? As he grew up, he learned that a man born in a remote isle of the Mediterranean had come to Paris as a youth—a man without friends or profession or status—and, finding that the reins of power had been dropped, had vaulted into the saddle, had seized them, and had ridden his steed on the curb. With naked hands, the unknown foreigner had conquered Paris, France, the world! The story of this adventurous career did not come to Balzac as an old wives' tale. It was the story of a man who lived and ruled; it was full of colour and throbbing with actuality. It permeated the boy's life; flooded his thirsty and receptive senses with kaleidoscopic pictures; peopled the virgin realm of his inner self with tremendous realities. We may well suppose that when Balzac learned to read fluently, it was through reading the Emperor's manifestoes—those proud, succinct communications which told with Roman simplicity the record of stupendous victories. Can we not see the child's stubby finger tracing the contours of France upon the map? Can we not follow the boy's eyes as the frontiers gradually enlarged, to include, at last, the greater part of Europe? Listen, is not this a fairy tale they are telling him? They say that Napoleon has crossed the Great St. Bernard with all his army; another day, he is over the Sierra Nevada; then he is heard of on the farther side of the Rhine, conquering Germany;

athwart the snows and into the heart of Russia; across the sea and fighting (by proxy, this time) at Gibraltar, where his ships are pounded to matchwood by the British guns. Only a short while since, some of these very soldiers were larking with the little fellow in the street, men whose faces were scarred by slashes from the Cossacks' barbaric swords; many a time he may have been wakened in the night by the clatter of the passing guns as they rumbled on their way to shatter the ice under the Russian cavalrymen at Austerlitz. All his youthful dreams and longings must have been concentred upon one name, one thought, one person: Napoleon.

Leading into the great park which runs from Paris away into the wide universe, is a huge triumphal arch; hereon the names of the conquered cities of half the world have been graven in the marble. What a vast sense of power and dominion this must have conveyed to the lad's impressionable mind! And what a terrible disappointment this same lad must have suffered on the day when foreign troops, music playing and flags flying, marched through the proud archway! Everything that happened in the outer world soaked into his heart as a fresh and vivid experience. Early in life he had to live through a mighty transvaluation of values, as much in the spiritual as in the material sphere. He saw assignats, whose value under the Republic had been frs. 100 or frs. 1000, thrown away as so much waste paper. The gold coins that passed through his hands were sometimes stamped with the late king's obese profile, at other times they bore the Jacobin cap of liberty, later the first consul's Roman effigy, anon Napoleon as emperor. He must soon have learned the purely relative nature of all values, living as he did in an epoch of such amazing change,

an epoch during which morals, money, land, laws, and frontiers, everything that for centuries had been dammed back behind solid masonry, suddenly dried up or, breaking through the floodgates, inundated the whole of life. He lived in a veritable whirlpool; and when, giddy and dazed, he looked around in search of some symbol, some constellation, to guide him amid the circling waves, his gaze always encountered this one figure, this epitome of activity, from whom all the shattering and inspiring events emanated.

One day he even saw Napoleon. It was on the occasion of a parade when the great man was surrounded by the creatures he had raised to prominence: Rustan, the Mameluke; Joseph, the brother into whose hands he had committed the destinies of Spain; Murat, to whom he had given Sicily; Bernadotte, the traitor; all those for whom he had provided crowns and had conquered kingdoms, whom he had lifted out of the obscurity and nothingness of their past into the radiant glory of his present. In one short second, an image had been stamped on the boy's retina, a figure more heroic than any that had hitherto filled the annals of history. The lad had seen the world conqueror! And to a boy, the sight of a great conqueror is surely father to the dream of becoming one himself. True, there were two other world conquerors alive in the opening years of the nineteenth century: one of them dwelt at Königsberg, the philosopher whose comprehensive insight had helped to simplify the confusions of the universe; and the other at Weimar, the writer whose thought was mastering the world as effectively as Napoleon had mastered it with his armies. But such conquests as these were in a

remote sphere as yet, so far as young Balzac was concerned. His discontent with a mere fragment, his craving for the whole, his ambition for all-embracing possession—these he owed to the example of Napoleon.

CHOICE OF PROFESSION

Balzac's will to world conquest did not at once find a suitable field of operations. He could not make up his mind on the choice of profession. Had he been born two years earlier, he would automatically have entered the Napoleonic armies as soon as he reached his eighteenth year; he might then have fought at Waterloo and faced the fire of the British squares. But history does not recapitulate. Following the storms of the Napoleonic epoch came a period of quiet, warm, summer days. Under Louis XVIII, the sword was no more than an ornament; the soldier, a courtling; the politician, an orator or the turner of pretty phrases. Public life ran to seed, the foamy torrent of events quieted down to the calm of a mill-pond. The world was no longer to be conquered by feats of arms. Napoleon, the exemplar of the few, had become the bugbear of the many. Art remained. Balzac began to write.

But not like all the others, in order to make money, to amuse people, to fill a shelf with books, to be the talk of the boulevards. He has no desire to earn the field-marshal's baton of literature: what he has set his heart on is to obtain the imperial throne itself. An attic is the scene of his first literary exploits. As if to test his powers, he writes, at the outset, under an assumed name. War has not yet been declared; these are but manœuvres, preliminary skirmishes, not yet a battle. Discontented with the result, disillusioned by his lack of success, he flings his work aside, and for three

or four years tries his luck at other trades, becomes a lawyer's clerk, looks around him, observing, enjoying what he sees, penetrating beneath the surface of things and events. Then he starts anew. This time he focuses his energies on the attainment of the goal; with a gargantuan avidity he determines to bring the whole world into the compass of his books. Despising the detail, the isolated phenomenon, the separate instance, he resolves to catch the mysterious complexity of the primal instincts in his embrace, to filter from the brew of occurrences the simple elements, to find harmony in the bustle and the noise, to press the world into his retort and to distil from the overplus of life the pure essence, to create everything anew "en raccourci," and, once having got all into his power, to animate this Balzacian cosmos with the breath of his own genius and to fashion it with his own hands. Nothing of life's multiformity is to go astray; yet, in order to enfold the infinite within finite forms, in order to bring the almost unattainable within the range of the humanly possible, he must have recourse to "compression." He devotes himself heart and soul to the process of sifting phenomena, so that everything irrelevant may be excluded. Having thus extracted the best and finest ingredients, he proceeds to knead them, to mould them with his ardent fingers, until gradually there emerges a co-ordinated system capable of being observed and analysed. In fact, he is a literary Linnæus, collecting the myriads of plants into a compact classification; or, like a chemist, analysing numberless compounds into their elements. Such is now the goal of his desires.

Balzac seeks to simplify the world in order to subdue it to his dominion, and to confine it within the walls of his magnificent prison-house, *La Comédie Humaine.* Thanks to this process of distillation, his characters become types, are always an abridged edition of a plurality from which an implacable artist has shorn everything superfluous or immaterial. Straightforward passion is the motive force, the unmixed type is the actor, an unpretentious environment is the setting, for *La comédie humaine.* He concentrates, inasmuch as he adapts the centralized administrative system to literary ends. Like Napoleon, he confines the world within the frontiers of France, and makes Paris the centre of the universe. Within this circle, again, in Paris itself, he draws many circles; one around the nobility, another around the clergy; others around manual workers, poets, artists, men of science, and so on. Fifty aristocratic salons are potted into one—the salon over which the Princesse de Cadignan reigns as presiding genius. A hundred different bankers are condensed to form Baron de Nucingen; an infinity of usurers go to the making of Gobseck; as many physicians, to that of Horace Bianchon. All these people live at closer quarters in his novels than they would in real life, they come more frequently into contact one with the other, combat one another more vehemently. Where in real life we should find a thousand variants, in his novels we must be content with one sample. He does

not recognize mixed types. His world is poorer than the actual world; but it is more intense. For his characters are distillates; the passions he depicts are pure elements; his tragedies are condensations.

Like Napoleon, he begins by conquering Paris. Then he sets about conquering France, province by province. Every department sends its representative, as it were, to Balzac's parliament. Then, again like a triumphant Consul Bonaparte, he flings his armies across all frontiers into foreign lands. His people go off to the fjords of Norway, or to the scorching tablelands of Spain; they pitch their tents beneath the torrid skies of Egypt, or are in the retreating army forcing a passage across the frozen waters of the Beresina. His urge to world conquest takes him everywhere, just as the same impulse had made his exemplar range far and wide. And, just as Napoleon, taking his ease in the lull between two campaigns, sets to work composing the Code civile, so Balzac, resting for a moment after his conquests in the *Comédie humaine*, produces a Code morale of love and marriage, traces the smiling and merry arabesque of *Les cent contes drolatiques*.

His wanderings take him into the dwellings where misery abides, into peasant hovels; thence he strolls into the mansions of the mighty at Saint-Germain, and penetrates into the private apartments of Napoleon himself. Wherever he goes, he breaks down the fourth wall, and therewith lays bare the secrets within the closed chamber. He rests among the soldiers under canvas in Brittany; he takes his chances on the stock exchange; peeps behind the scenes at the theatres; pries into the labours of savants. His wizard's eye pierces into every nook and cranny. His army is composed of two or three thousand individuals, whom

he has conjured out of the earth. Naked they are, when summoned from the void: but their creator throws a few garments over them; gives them title and wealth, as Napoleon did in the case of his marshals. If his whim suggests, he deprives them of all he has bestowed; he plays with them, jostles them one against the other. Events crowd upon us in these books; we view innumerable landscapes which serve as background. The conquest of the world effected in *La comédie humaine* is just as unique in the history of literature as Napoleon's conquests in the history of modern times; Balzac seems to grasp the whole of life in his two hands. As a boy he dreamed of conquering the world, and nothing is more potent than an early resolve which realizes itself in action. The sentence he wrote under a picture of Napoleon was no idle boast in his case: "Ce qu'il n'a pu achever par l'épée je l'accomplirai par la plume."

PERSONS OF THE COMEDY

His heroes resemble their progenitor, for they are all inspired with the idea of world conquest. A centripetal force drags them away from provincial life into Paris. The great town is their battlefield. The lure of the metropolis has brought this army thither; virgin souls, untested as yet, full of raw energies for which they seek an outlet. Here, needy but ambitious, they jostle one another, destroy one another, clamber up the social ladder, tumble back again into oblivion. For none is there a place prepared. Each must win his own laurels. Balzac was the first to make it clear that the fight within the circle of civilized social life is no less strenuous than that which takes place upon the battlefield. "My bourgeois novels are more tragical than your tragic dramas," he once exclaimed to the romanticists.

The first lesson Balzac's young people have to learn is ruthlessness. They know that their numbers are excessive, and that they must therefore gobble one another up "like spiders in a pot," as Vautrin observes. The weapon with which their youth has armed them must be tested in the fires of experience; and it is only those who survive the ordeal who are "right." From all the thirty-two points of the compass they come, like the "sansculottes of the Grand' Armée"; they kick their shoes out on the march to Paris; the dust of the highway clings to their clothes; their throats are parched with a thirst for enjoyment. They look around them on reaching this new and magical sphere of elegance

and wealth and might; they feel they are indeed poorly equipped to set about conquering these palaces, these women, these powers. If they are to make the most of their talents, they must pass them again through the fires, must toughen their youthful energies, must convert common sense into cunning, beauty into vice, boldness into subtlety. Balzac's heroes, in their avidity, aim at possessing the All; no less will suffice their greed. Like adventures happen to every one of them. A tilbury dashes by, sprinkling them with mud; the driver cracks his whip; in the carriage sits a fair lady, jewels asparkle in her hair. A glance is exchanged; the dame is seductively beautiful, a symbol of pleasure. Instantly the identical thought flashes through the brain of all Balzac's heroes: Mine! Mine the woman, the carriage, the domestics, the wealth, Paris, the world! Napoleon's example, showing that (even for the least of men) power is a marketable commodity, has corrupted them. They are no longer content as were their provincial fathers of old to fight for a vineyard, a prefecture, a heritage; what they are after is nothing more than a symbol, it is true, for they strive to gain power, to rise into the august circles where the sun of kingship shines and where streams of money flow freely. Inspired with such ambitious designs, they become those pushing individuals whom Balzac endows with stronger muscles, wilder eloquence, more energetic impulses, and a more rapid and eventful career, than is granted to most mortals. They are beings whose dreams realize themselves in action; they are poets who poetize with the very substance of life. Two methods of approach are available: the man of genius breaks trail for himself; the others make use of the beaten road. If one wishes to attain to power one must devise means of one's

own to get there; failing this, one must follow the trail, must learn the methods approved of by society. If any one stands between you and your goal you must smite him ruthlessly to earth, or poison him: such is Vautrin's advice, Vautrin the anarchist, the figure Balzac draws on such a grand scale.

In the Latin Quarter, where Balzac himself started life as a writer, his heroes meet. Here we encounter those archetypes of social life: Desplein, the medical student; Rastignac, the arrivist; Louis Lambert, the philosopher; Bridau, the painter; Rubempré, the journalist; a "cénacle" of young men, inchoate elements, rudimentary characters, and yet—the whole of life, grouped round the dining-table in that fabulous "Maison Vauquer." But these people become metamorphosed in the great retort of life; they lose their true essence when the container is boiled in the heat of the passions, when it is suffered to cool again in the icy atmosphere of disappointment, when it is subjected to the manifold activities of society—to mechanical friction, magnetic attraction, chemical disintegration, molecular decomposition. Paris, the acid of acids, dissolves them, eats them up, separates them, allows them to disappear; or, she may crystallize them, harden them, and petrify them. All the activities of change, colouring, and unification, are brought to completion in them; and out of the combined elements new complexes arise. Thus, ten years later, the survivors, those who have been transformed in the crucibles, meet upon the mountain tops of life, and greet one another with augur smiles: Desplein, the celebrated physician; Rastignac, the minister of State; Bridau, the famous painter; whereas Louis Lambert and Rubempré have been crushed beneath the wheels of fate.

Balzac made good use of his knowledge of chemistry, and of the work of his beloved authors Cuvier and Lavoisier. The complicated process of action and reaction, of affinities, of attraction and repulsion, of separation and systematization, of disintegration and crystallization, this atomistic simplification of combinations, seemed to him to give a better picture of social cohesion than any other. The idea—which he christened "Lamarckism," and which Taine was later to petrify into a formula—that every multiplicity reacts upon a unity with no less vigour than does a unity upon a multiplicity, that each individual is a product of climate, of the society in which he is reared, of customs, of chance, of all that fate has brought his way, that each individual absorbs the atmosphere by which he is surrounded as he grows to adulthood and in his turn radiates an atmosphere which others will absorb; this universal influence of the world within and the world without upon the formation of character, became an axiom with Balzac. Everything flows into everything else; all forces are mobile, and not one of them is free—such was his view.

Unrestricted relativism makes continuity impossible, even the continuity of character. Balzac always allows the figures in his books to form themselves upon events. They are modelled by the hand of fate as clay is moulded by the potter. Their very names embody a transformative process, and are nowise unified. The Baron de Rastignac, a peer of France, marches through twenty of the books. One fondly imagines one knows him, that one can recognize the ruthless arrivist as he saunters along the street, or dominates a social gathering, or appears in a newspaper; that one identifies this prototype of the brutal, pitiless striver amid the Parisian world of fashion; that one is acquainted with the

creature who slips like an eel through the clutches of the law, and who incorporates the morality of a corrupt society. Yet in one of the books we are presented with another Rastignac, a poor young man of aristocratic birth, whom his parents have sent to Paris with little money but high hopes, a gentle, quiet, modest, sentimental creature. We are shown how he comes to be in the Maison Vauquer, in that witch's cauldron of contending characters.

Here, with one of those marvellous condensations in which Balzac excels, he displays the whole gamut of temperaments and characters within the four walls of a modest dwelling. The young nobleman witnesses a tragedy, like that of King Lear, in the person of le Père Goriot; sees how the tinsel princess of the Faubourg Saint-Germain robs her father of everything he once possessed; contemplates the vileness of society and its culmination in catastrophe. And when, in the end, he follows the coffin of the all too kindly old man to the grave, a lonely mourner, he is temporarily filled with scorn for Paris. He sees the town as a dirty yellow and malignant sore spread out at the foot of the hill on which is the cemetery of Père Lachaise. At that moment he is informed with all the knowledge of life, and he hears the voice of Vautrin whispering in his ear: You have to use men as post-horses, harnessing them to your chariot and whipping them forward on their way, to let them founder at the winning post. At that minute the gentle youth is transformed into the Baron de Rastignac of the other books, the relentless, ruthless hustler, the pair de France.

All Balzac's heroes experience such a crisis on their march through life. Every one of them becomes a soldier in the war of all against all, pressing eagerly forward over

the bodies of the slain. Each has to cross the Rubicon, each has to experience his Waterloo. Balzac shows us that the same fights take place no matter where we are, whether in palaces or in huts or in taverns; that under the garments of priests, doctors, soldiers, lawyers, the same impulses rage. This is well known to Vautrin, who plays so many parts in Balzac's works, and who is nevertheless always the same, always consciously the same. Beneath the smooth surface of modern life, the old struggles persist. Beneath the semblance of equality, the envious longing for predominance is still at work. Since no place is now reserved as of old for the king, the nobility, and the priesthood, since all have a right to everything, everyone strives with tenfold vigour to capture the position which his sense of self-importance assigns to him. The curtailing of possibilities stimulates the craving to make the most of those that remain.

It is precisely this murderous and suicidal warring of energies which stimulates Balzac to the exercise of his art. To depict energy, striving towards a goal, as the expression of a conscious and vital will, not in its effect but in its essence—such is the passion that possesses him. So long as this energy is intensive, he cares little or not at all whether it be good or bad, whether it be wasted energy or energy turned to good account. Intensity of purpose, will, these are everything, because they are the inherent qualities of man: success and fame are nothing, for they are subject to chance. The petty thief who, hungry and full of fear, sneaks a loaf of bread from the baker's, is merely a bore; the thief on the large scale, the professional miscreant, who steals, not because he is in want, but because he is filled with the

desire to grapple everything to himself, such a one cuts a grand figure.

In Balzac's view, to measure the actual effects is the duty of the historian; to exhibit the causes, and to depict intensity, fall to the lot of the imaginative writer. Power becomes tragical only if it does not reach the goal. Balzac portrays the "héros oubliés," since every epoch has not one Napoleon alone, has not only the Napoleon of the historians, the man who conquered the world between the years 1796 and 1815, but four or five others whose deeds are not inscribed upon the pages of history. One, whose name was Desaix, may have fallen at Marengo; another may have been sent to Upper Egypt by the real Napoleon, sent far away from the actual happenings of the day; a third may have passed through the greatest of all tragedies, may have been a Napoleon who never reached a battlefield but was condemned to live out his life in some hidden corner of a remote province. Yet such men as these did not expend less energy than Napoleon, even though they were forced to expend it on minor issues.

Balzac shows us women who by their devotion and their beauty would have become celebrities under the Roi Soleil, whose names would have been as bright with glory as that of Pompadour or of Diane de Poitiers; he talks of poets whose talents run to seed because the times are unfavourable to their development, whom fame has passed by unnoticed, and whom the poets of a later day must crown with laurels. He knows that every second of life witnesses a tremendous wastage of energy. He knows that Eugénie Grandet, the sentimental country lass, at the moment when she tremblingly gives the purse of money to her cousin

before the very eyes of her avaricious father, is no less heroic than Jeanne d'Arc whose effigy in marble is to be found in wellnigh every marketplace of France. Success cannot blind the biographer of a thousand careers, cannot deceive one who has analysed all the ingredients of the social compost.

Balzac's incorruptible eyes, concentrated upon the detection of energy, perceive amid the whirligig of actualities only that which is living tension. In the stampede on the banks of the Beresina, for instance, when Napoleon's disrupted army is struggling to cross the river, when the despair and the villainy and the heroism of a hundred similar scenes are compressed into a second, he selects, as the truly great heroes of the occasion, the forty sappers, whose names no one can tell, who for three days together stand breast-deep in the numbing water and amid the drifting ice, in order to bridge the current by which half of the Grand Army is subsequently swept to destruction. He knows that behind the curtained windows of Parisian houses tragedies occur every minute, catastrophes which are no less overwhelming than Juliet's suicide, Wallenstein's murder, or Lear's madness and despair. Always he is ready to reiterate his own words: "My bourgeois novels are more tragical than your tragic dramas!" For his romances are not concerned with mere externals. Vautrin, for all that he is dressed like an ordinary citizen of the modern world, is no less impressive a figure than Quasimodo, the quaintly clad bellringer in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame;* nor are the arid, rocky landscapes of the soul, the undergrowth of passion and greed which cumber the breast of this supreme arrivist, less terrible than the awful abysses in the mind of Han d'Islande.

Balzac does not depend upon drapery for his effects, any more than he has recourse to the exotic or to the remote annals of history for his settings. What he relies upon is the super-dimensional, the enhanced intensity of an emotion unified through singleness of purpose. He realizes that a feeling does not become important until it can remain unimpaired, in its full force; that a man is great only in so far as he concentrates on a goal, does not fritter away his energies on incidental desires, but allows his ruling passion to imbibe the juices of all the other emotions, growing strong through robbery and a fierce disregard of conflicting claims—just as a branch will become more robust if the gardener lops off subsidiary branches.

It is such monomaniacs of passion whom Balzac has portrayed; persons who conceive of the world under the aspect of one single symbol, who are constant to one aim amid the great whirl.

The basic axiom of his theory of energetics is a kind of mechanics of the passions: the belief that every life expends an equal sum of energy, no matter upon what illusions it dissipates the volitional appetite; no matter whether it uses them up slowly in the course of a thousand excitements, or cherishes them thriftily for a time, in order to lavish them on one headlong ecstasy; no matter whether the fire of life burns quietly and steadily, or flames up in an explosion. He who lives quicker does not live a shorter time, any more than one who lives in harmony with himself forgoes the multiplicity of experience. For a work which aims at the depiction of types, at the presentation of none but pure elements, monomaniacs are alone of importance. The feeble among mankind are of no interest to our author. He cares only for people who cling to their life illusion with

every nerve and muscle of their bodies; who concentrate all their thoughts upon it, whether that illusion be love or art, avarice or self-sacrifice, courage or indolence, politics or friendship. Whatever the symbol may be, they must embrace it wholeheartedly.

These "hommes à passion," these fanatical believers in a religion of their own creation, glance neither to right nor to left. They talk in many tongues to one another, but do not understand one another's language. If a woman, the most beautiful in the world, offers her charms to a man who has a craze not for women but for bibelots, he will ignore her advances; a lover may have a chance of a fine career, but he will not for that reason turn aside from the pursuit of love; a miser may be presented with treasure other than money, yet he will ignore it and refuse to take his eyes off the contemplation of his hoard. Once he allows himself to be seduced from his beloved passion, he is lost. Muscles waste if they are not used, sinews that have not been stretched for years become rigid, and he who has for long been a virtuoso of one particular passion, an athlete in the exercise of one particular emotion, is a weakling and a bungler in any other province of emotional activity. A feeling that is pushed to the point of monomania comes to dominate all the other feelings, depriving them of nutriment so that they perish; the dominant emotion flourishes at the expense of the others. All the gradations and accidents of love—jealousy and sadness, exhaustion and ecstasy—are reflected in the miser's mania for hoarding, in the collector's mania for collecting; absolute perfection incorporates the sum-total of emotional possibilities. The emotions proper to all the neglected possibilities are concentrated in one leading passion.

Such is the theme of Balzac's great tragedies. The money-maker Nucingen, having amassed millions, excelling all the bankers of the empire in sagacity, becomes a silly child in the hands of a strumpet; the poet who plunges into journalism is ground to powder between the upper and the nether millstones. A particular vision of the world (a symbol, no more) is jealous as was Jehovah of old, who said: "Thou shalt have none other Gods before me!" And among the passions there are none of greater and none of lesser importance; one does not take precedence over the others, any more than there exists a hierarchy among landscapes and dreams. None are too lowly. "Why should not stupidity be the theme of a tragedy?" Balzac asks. "Why should not shame, anxiety, and boredom be fitting subjects?" These, too, are motive forces, impulsive powers; these, too, are significant if they be but sufficiently intense. Even the sorriest trend of life has a vivacity and a beauty of its own as soon as it becomes unified and intensified to enable a mortal to challenge the limits imposed by fate.

These archetypal forces, or, rather, these thousand protean forms of the one and only archetypal energy, must be wrenched from the human breast, scourged by the emotions, inebriated by the elixirs of hate and of love; Balzac wishes to see them rave in their intoxication, dash themselves upon the rocks of chance; he jostles them together and rends them asunder; sets up a system of communications, bridges the chasm between one dream and another, between the miser and the collector, between the seeker after fame and the amatory enthusiast; again and again he reshapes the parallelogram of forces; in every destiny he scans the formidable abyss between wave hollow

and wave crest; he gazes at these tumultuous lives as eagerly as Gobseck, the usurer, stared at Countess Restand's diamonds. If the fire should seem to be dying down, he fans the flames into a blaze; he goads on his characters as if he were a slave-driver and they were slaves, never permits them to rest, trundles them about hither and thither—as Napoleon hustled his soldiers, marching them from Austria into La Vendée; shipping them overseas to Egypt; sending them to Rome, through the Brandenburg Gate, or up to the Alhambra; haling them from victory to defeat over the steppes of Russia to Moscow, and leaving half of them to die upon the road, mowed down by the shrapnel of the enemy or bitten to death by frost and snow. Thus Balzac cuts the world out into figurines, paints suitable scenery, and then pulls the strings and makes the marionettes play the parts he has assigned to them. To accomplish all this is his own ruling passion!

THE ARCH-MONOMANIAC

For Balzac was himself one of those monomaniacs he delighted to portray! Discouraged by an unresponsive world which did not appreciate his first efforts in the field of literature, he withdrew into himself and created a symbolic world. This world was to belong to him, to be governed by him, to cease when he himself ceased. Reality rushed past him, and he never stirred a finger to arrest its flight and grasp it. He locked himself into his room, sat glued to his chair before his writing-table, lived among the characters he created, like Elie Magus, the collector, among his pictures. From the time he was twenty-five, reality interested him merely in so far as it provided fuel to set the wheels of his own world in motion. He almost deliberately allowed the life without to slip by unheeded, so great was his dread that a contact between the two worlds, his own and the real one, might be fraught with pain. At eight o'clock he would go to bed, weary with his day's work, would sleep for four hours, and get someone to rouse him at midnight. Then, while Paris, the noisy outer world, closed its glowing eyes in sleep, when darkness fell upon the bustling streets, his own world would awaken. He would build it alongside the other world, using the latter's disintegrated elements for the work of construction. Stimulating his tired brain with cup after cup of black coffee, he would enjoy feverish ecstasy. Thus he would toil for ten, twelve, and, at times, for eighteen hours, till something recalled him

to the world of reality. At these moments of awakening, his face must surely have borne the expression which the sculptor has given him. In Rodin's statue, we see him looking as if he had incontinently been wrenched from out the highest heaven, and abruptly deposited in a long-forgotten reality; it is an expression of alarm, at once exalted and horrified; he seems almost to be in the act of screaming; his hand is pulling his cloak over his shivering shoulders; his face looks as if he had been startled from slumber, like a sleepwalker whom someone has rudely awakened by shouting his name.

No other artist succeeds in losing himself in his work as perfectly as Balzac, none has a more confident belief in his own dream, none allows hallucination to carry him so near to the boundary of self-deception. He sometimes found it almost impossible to curb his excitement once the machinery had been set in motion; image and reality seemed to him equally concrete; and he could not always draw a sharp line between his inner world and the world outside. A book has been filled with anecdotes showing how fervent was his belief in the existence of his characters, a book that is comical and at times a little gruesome. A friend comes to pay a call. Balzac rushes up to him, crying: "Just fancy, the poor thing has killed herself!" The look of horror on his visitor's face reminds him that the person of whom he speaks, Eugénie Grandet, exists nowhere but in his own fancy. Perhaps the only thing which differentiates those vivid and lasting hallucinations from the hallucinations of a madman is that Balzac's imaginary figures were subject to the same causal determinisms as those that prevail in the domain of objective reality. His characters seem, indeed, to have knocked at the door of his study, and to

have passed from the outer world into the world of his books.

But his absorption in his work was tantamount to monomania in its persistence, its intensity, and its concentration. His industry was a veritable fever, an intoxication, a delirium. It resembled a magic potion which he drank that he might forget his hunger for life. He had all the makings of the spendthrift and the "grand viveur," and he himself admits that his orgies of work partook of the nature of sensual enjoyment. For, like the monomaniacs in his books, a man of such strong passions as Balzac could renounce their gratification only through finding a substitute for them. He could afford to miss all the condiments of life, such as love, ambition, wealth, travel, fame, and victory, because in his creative works he enjoyed these sensations vicariously, intensified to a sevenfold degree. His senses were like children; they could not distinguish true from false, dream from reality. All they wanted was to be fed; and they were indifferent as to whether the food provided was actual experience or the stuff that dreams are made of.

Throughout life, Balzac cheated his senses of their due. He satisfied their hunger with no more than the aroma of the viands. His own experience consisted of a passionate participation in the pleasures of the characters he created. For he himself threw the ten louis d'or on to the gaming-table, he himself stood trembling as the roulette wheel turned, he himself it was who with feverish fingers clutched the winnings; it was he himself who had a wonderful theatrical success, who stormed the heights with his brigade, who convulsed the stock market with his machinations. All the delights or sorrows he ascribed to his creatures belonged to him, compensating him for the barrenness of

personal experience. He toyed with these beings as Gobseck the usurer toyed with the poor, hopeless wretches who came to borrow money, playing them like fish at the end of his line, judicially contemplating their joy or sorrow as the more or less talented display of an actor. Balzac is speaking for himself when Gobseck says: "Do you fancy that it is a small matter, to delve into the secret places of a man's heart, to penetrate so deep that at last it stands naked before you?"

POWER OF AUTO-SUGGESTION

He is the wizard of the will, absorbing all foreign matter into himself, making it his own, transforming dreams into living reality. We are told that in youth, when all he had for dinner in his garret was a loaf of bread, he was wont to draw a circle in chalk on his table to represent a plate; within the circle he would write the name of some favourite dish, and then—so great was the power of his creative imagination—he could taste the succulent victuals and thus help down the insipid morsel. Just as, in this case, he fancied he could actually savour the dainty meats, so, in the course of writing his books he was able, in fancy, to relish all the delights of life; he could cheat himself into believing that he was rich instead of poor, and that he could be as extravagant as his puppets if such happened to be his pleasure. He who was always crushed by debts and persecuted by creditors, must have experienced a genuinely sensuous delight when he wrote such words as, "an income of a hundred thousand francs a year." It was he himself who spent glorious hours contemplating Elie Magus's collection of pictures, he who in the person of Goriot loved the two graceless daughters, he who with Seraphitus explored the fjords of Norway, he who as Rubempré revelled in the admiring glance of ladies; it was for his own delectation that he lavished pleasure upon these people, that he brewed philtres of pleasure or of pain for them out of the bright herbs and the dark with which the earth abounds.

It seems to me that no writer has ever participated so fully as he in his characters' joys and sorrows. More especially are we aware of this self-hypnotization in those places where he is describing the wonder-working power of riches such as he would gladly have had at his own command. This is his predominant passion, this ebb and flux of numbers, this winning and losing of vast sums, this tossing of capital from hand to hand, this swelling of bank balances and catastrophic crashing of values. He suddenly overwhelms beggars with an avalanche of wealth, or allows millions to slip through nerveless fingers. He loves depicting the palaces of the faubourgs, and the magic power of money. The words "millions" and "milliards" are perpetually recurring in his pages. Voluptuously, like odalisques awaiting the master's choice, the costly furniture and the exquisite curios are spread out in the rooms for us to admire. We can trace this fever even in his manuscripts. To begin with the lines are carefully penned, in a charming, well-formed script; anon, like the veins of the choleric, they swell, become tortuous, are overheated. Often, the pages bear splashes of coffee. One can almost fancy one hears the scream of the overdriven machinery, sees the convulsive spasm of the fanatical creator, witnesses the greed of the man who wishes to possess all. Even his proof-correction savours of the ferocious. Life a fever-racked man tearing open his wound, he often dislocates the whole structure of his creation in order to transfuse it with fresh and invigorating blood.

Such strenuous application to work would be incomprehensible were it not that we know it was an outlet for the author's pent-up passions, a method of expression for an ascetic who had renounced all other forms of gratification,

a vent for one who saw in art the only possibility for the discharge of his tensions. Once or twice, indeed, he tried other means. He made a venture in practical life, butted into commercial activities he knew absolutely nothing about, founded a printing establishment. But none of these undertakings prospered. He who in his books showed so much perspicacity, who knew all the tricks of the stock exchange, all the intricacies of large or small business deals, all the wiles of the usurers; he who had ordered the lives of hundreds of individuals in his novels, had helped them to build up their fortunes, who had made Grandet, Popinot, Crevel, Goriot, Bridau, Nucingen, Wehrbrust, and Gobseck wealthy men; he who, where the characters in his books were concerned, could reckon things at their true value, was himself brought to financial ruin, so that nothing remained to him but a burden of debt which he had to carry about with him all the remaining years of his life. Compelled by financial stress to toil unremittingly, a helot of the pen, he succumbed at last to the apoplectic stroke which released him. In its jealousy, the forsaken passion (the only one he ever surrendered himself to), his art, wreaked terrible vengeance upon him. Even love, which for most of us is a wonderful dream superimposed upon actual experience, was for him no more than something he constructed out of dream material. Madame Hanska, the Polish lady who ultimately became his wife, "l'étrangère," the recipient of those famous letters, was passionately loved by him ere he had ever looked into her eyes, while she was still an incorporeal being, "a golden-eyed girl," a Delphine or an Eugénie Grandet. Everything which takes a genuine literary artist away from his work of creation, from his world of fantasy, must be looked upon as a deviation from

his prescribed road through life. "L'homme de lettres doit s'abstenir des femmes, elles font perdre son temps, on doit se borner à leur écrire, cela forme le style," he once said to Théophile Gautier. As a matter of fact, he never really loved Madame Hanska herself, but was in love with his love for her; he did not care for the situations which arose through outward circumstances, but only for those he created for himself from his own brain. So long did he satisfy his hunger for reality with illusions, so long did he play with imaginative pictures and costumes, that in the end he came to believe in his own immaterial passions. He indulged this lust for creation without pause; nor did he cease fanning the flames of inspiration till the day of his death. With every new book he put his hand to, he curtailed the scene of his outward activities; his life shrank, like the wild ass's skin in his symbolical novel; he succumbed to his monomania, just as a gambler does to the lure of the cards, the toper to wine, the hashish dreamer to the fateful pipe, the voluptuary to women. And the too complete gratification of his wishes was, in the end, his undoing.

INDOMITABLE WILL

It was only natural that a man of such amazing will power should be a law unto himself; for an understanding of his own wizardry enabled him to comprehend the mystery of life ambushed within his own magical endowments. Was he not constantly clothing his dreams with so great a vitality, and endowing them with such a colossal capacity for vibrant emotion, that they became no less creatures of blood and bone than reality itself? A man whose creative will was of such a nature as Balzac's, could not be expected to have any specific philosophy of life; at all events he disclosed no characteristically personal outlook. Maybe this was because of his innate mutability of temperament, his power to assume, like Proteus, many different shapes, to slip himself into the bodies of a thousand creations of his brain, to lose himself in the labyrinth of their lives, to become, as occasion demanded, an optimist, an altruist, a pessimist, or a relativist.

He passes no judgment on the morality of his characters. Balzac seems content to "épouser les opinions des autres"; he spontaneously takes up others' opinions, but never identifies himself with them for long at a time. He is trapped for a while inside the body cavity of his characters, and participates temporarily in their passions and vices. The only thing perdurable about him is his indomitable will. This it is which, like the words "open sesame," magically gains him access into his creatures' hearts, so that he can explore

their catacombs and emerge again laden with spoils garnered among their emotions. He must have ascribed to the will an especially potent ability to pass from the realm of the spiritual into that of the material. Indeed, this almost amounted to a vital principle and a universal law, so far as he was concerned. The will, this imponderable medium which, radiating from a Napoleon, is capable of shaking the world, overthrowing empires, setting up kings, giving an unforeseen twist to innumerable destinies—this immaterial vibration of a spiritual factor—must, he knew, manifest itself in material reality, must model the physiognomy, and pervade the corporeal matter of the entire body. For, if a fugitive emotion is capable of finding expression on a man's countenance, beautifying the plainest features and imparting character to them, how much more effectively must a persistent will, and enduring passion, set a stamp upon the face.

For Balzac, indeed, a face was a stone tablet whereon the life-will had placed its sign manual. And, just as geologists are able to tell the story of a whole epoch by studying the lesson of the rocks and the fossils to be found therein, so, Balzac contended, should an imaginative writer be able, by studying faces, to decipher the character and the inner possibilities of men. The charm he found in the art of reading physiognomies led him greatly to appreciate Gall's work in this field; his topographical studies of the capacities residing in the brain led him to the reading of Lavater's books. Lavater, likewise, maintained that facial geography was nothing other than a life-will expressed in flesh and bone, nothing other than character transferred to the exterior. Everything which emphasized this magical interplay of the inner and the outer life, seemed to Balzac a

desirable asset. Mesmer's teaching about the magnetic transference of the will of a medium into another person, was an article of faith with him. Nor was he less credulous in his belief that the fingers were endowed with a magnetic power whereby the will could be transmitted from individual to individual. He linked these ideas up with the mystical spiritualizations of Swedenborg. All such ideas he compacted into a more or less systematic theory, and gave utterance to them through the mouth of Louis Lambert, the "chemist of the will," cut off in his prime. This Louis Lambert is at one and the same time a portrait of Balzac as he was, and a sketch of the perfected Balzac he would have liked to be; and that is why Lambert embodies more autobiography than any other of Balzac's imaginary figures.

SECOND SIGHT

Every face he saw was for him a charade to be unriddled. He fancied he could discern a likeness to some animal in every one of them; thought he could detect the signs which pointed to an early death; boasted that he could guess the profession of any passer-by through a study of externals of gait and clothing. Yet this intuitive knowledge did not satisfy him; it was not the supreme art of the seer; for it merely concerned the extant, that which exists in the present. His ambition went far beyond this. He wanted to be one of those who could foresee the trends that would develop in the future as an outcome of the working of the past; he wished he might be sib to the chiromancers, the soothsayers, the "voyants," the casters of horoscopes, brother of those gifted with second sight, who could judge of the inner self by what the outer self divulged, could read destiny in the lines of a hand and retrace in these same lines the story of early experiences.

According to Balzac, such magical powers of penetration are not given to persons whose intelligence is dissipated in a thousand and one activities. The idea of concentration is perpetually recurring in the mind of this author, so that in the matter of occult powers, too, he feels the necessity of having one very definite aim. Second sight is not the exclusive prerogative of sorcerers and wise women. This spontaneous and visionary knowledge is also given to mothers in relation to their children; to doctors, such as

Desplein, who from the confused sufferings of his patients could trace the cause of the ailment, and could foretell approximately how long they would live; to soldiers like Napoleon, who knew in a flash from which spot he must launch his brigades to the assault in order to decide the issue of the battle. Marsay, the seducer, has the gift, and utilizes it to catch a woman at the precise moment when she is likely to yield to his desires; Nucingen, the gambler on the stock exchange, knows the appropriate second in which to conclude the deal that will work havoc in the financial world. All these astrologers of the mind possess this knowledge because their gaze is turned inward, because their concentrated vision is able to pass beyond the physical horizons which limit the perspectives of ordinary eyes.

Herein we detect an affinity between the poet's vision and the deduction of the learned: the one, so rapid and spontaneous in apperception; the other, slow and methodical in its conclusions. Balzac was puzzled by his own intuitive faculty. He must often have contemplated his work with astonishment, as something incomprehensible, which had forced him to the philosophical outlook of a mystic whom de Maistre's Catholicism no longer sufficed. This kernel of magic, which was part and parcel of his innermost being, this inconceivable something which made him look upon art not merely as the chemistry but also as the alchemy of life, differentiated Balzac from the realists of a later day. These imitators of Balzac's art, Zola in especial, laboriously pile stone upon stone where he simply turns the ring on his finger and in an instant conjures up a palace with a thousand windows. Despite the steady and ferocious diligence he applied to the composition of his books, our first

impression is an awareness not so much of the labour, as of the witchery; we do not merely appreciate a variegated spectacle of life, but feel that the author has enriched us by the bestowal of a priceless gift.

During all the years of his creative activity, Balzac never resumed study and experiment, was never again an observer of actual life. He seldom returned to that world which lay outside the world of his own creation. His hallucinations kept him prisoner, kept him chained to his work. When he did make one of his ephemeral excursions into the real world, when he came out to do battle with his publisher, or to carry the proofs of a new novel to the printer, when he went to dine with a friend or to rummage in one of the Parisian curiosity shops, it was, rather, to gain confirmation than to acquire information. The whole science of life seemed to have penetrated into him, lay collected within his brain, warehoused as it were. Save for the almost saga-like figure of Shakespeare, one of the most puzzling things in the world of literature is the way in which Balzac acquired his amazing knowledge, how he found time to amass such stores of information concerning all classes of professions and trades, concerning so varied an assemblage of temperaments and phenomena. He spent no more than three or four youthful years as a lawyer's clerk, as a publisher, as a student. Yet he must have spent this short time to excellent advantage. He must have had an unusual capacity for absorption, and an astounding memory for every kind of minutiæ, a memory which allowed no item to go rusty, to wither away, to get confused or spoiled, a memory which kept everything ordered and docketed, ready for instant use. He had merely to press the spring and all lay available to his hand.

RAPIDITY OF VISION

Balzac knew everything there was to know about the intricacies of lawsuits, tactics on the field of battle, manœuvring on the stock market, speculation in house property, the secrets of chemistry, the ruses of perfumers, the wiles of artists, the dissertations of theologians, fake journalism, the tricks of the theatre proper and of that other stage called politics. He knew the details of provincial life, Parisian life, and life in the world at large. He, a master flâneur, conned the lessons of the streets as he strolled along: he knew by the mere look of a house when it had been built, by whom, and for whom; he deciphered the coat-of-arms over the door, and had thoughts of the appropriate epoch called up by the architecture; he could make a shrewd guess at the rent, peopled every story with occupants, placed furniture in the rooms, and tenanted them with happy folk or unhappy; from floor to floor, he traced the network of destiny that enmeshed the whole building and its inhabitants. His knowledge was encyclopædic. He knew what a picture by Palma Vecchio would fetch, could tell you exactly how much an acre of meadowland would cost, or the price of a piece of lace, the upkeep of a tilbury and manservant. The life of society people was an open book to him, a life that fluctuated between a vegetative existence burdened with debt and a feverish state of excitement when in one year a fortune might be squandered. A few pages further in the same story, he may show us the life of a man

trying to eke out a living on some paltry income, when the tearing of an umbrella or the breaking of a window-pane assumes the proportions of a catastrophe. Then he leads us into the purlieus where the real poor dwell, shows us how every penny is earned, depicts the impoverished water-carrier from Auvergne whose one ambition is to earn money enough to buy a pony which will save him most of the hard work on the rounds; makes us acquainted with the student and the sempstress; gives us a sight of all those quasi-vegetative existences which go to the making of a great city. A thousand landscapes rise before our eyes, forming a background against which these innumerable destinies pass to and fro. After a single glance at such a landscape, he knows all its details better than does one who has lived in it for years.

Balzac had but to cast a fleeting glance at something, and he knew it in its smallest particulars. Nay more (and this is the marvel of the creative artist's work), he knew the aspect of things he had never seen with his bodily eyes. Thus the fjords of Norway and the walls of Saragossa were as real to him as if he had visited them, and he could make them no less vivid to his readers. The rapidity of his visual intake was extraordinary. It was as if he contemplated things in their starkest nudity and distinctness, where others see them muffled in manifold draperies. He had the key to all their mysteries in his possession, so that he need but unlock the door to lay their secrets bare. Thus it was that faces opened up to him, and the character that was concealed behind dropped into his hand like a seed from a ripe fruit. With one sweep, he pushed aside all that was immaterial, and disclosed only that which was fundamental. But he did not disclose it slowly, layer by layer. On the contrary, his

revelation came with explosive force and suddenness, opening up the gold mines of life itself. And, together with these actual forms, he grasped the intangible atmosphere surrounding joy and sorrow, and seized upon the elusive emotional convulsions that hover between heaven and earth. What others see in a glass darkly, Balzac saw face to face.

LACK OF FORMAL PLAN

This exceptional power of intuitively knowing all things, is the essence of Balzac's genius. In respect of the familiar talents of the literary artist—the faculty to range qualities, to give order and coherency to characters, the power to bind and to loose—he was not strikingly endowed. There is a distinct temptation to say that he was not so much an artist within the meaning of the act as a genius. The dictum, "une telle force n'a pas besoin d'art," applies in his case admirably well. For, to be sure, we are here confronted with so stupendous a power that, like a mighty lord of the jungle, it refuses to be tamed; it is beautiful as a forest, a torrent, a thunderstorm; it has the quality of all those things whose æsthetic value lies in the intensity of their manifestations. Without symmetry, they are lovely; without the aid of the decorative arts, they are magnificent; without elaborate analysis, they are perfectly comprehensible: they rely for effect upon the immeasurable multiformity of their untamed energies.

Balzac never "composed" his novels, never had any plan for the course his story was to run. He lost himself in his work, gave himself up to it as to a passion. He floundered among words, as if his feet were caught in the intricate folds of a mass of drapery; he buried himself in words, as he might have buried his face in the fair young nakedness of his beloved. His characters come from every conceivable stratum of the population, from all the provinces of France;

he divides them up into brigades, assigning some to the cavalry, others to the artillery, and a third group to the commissariat; scatters gunpowder in the pans of their firing-pieces—and then abandons them to their own devices. Despite its beautiful—though somewhat redundant—preface, *La comédie humaine* has no inner cohesion, no definite plan. Indeed, the work is as lacking in a definite plan as life itself is—in Balzac's estimation. It does not aim at pointing a moral, nor is it intended to give a survey of the manners and customs of those days. In its own mutability, it is meant to portray the everlasting mutability of persons and things. It ebbs and flows rhythmically, like the tides.

The only law of this new cosmos was that everything which influenced or was influenced by anything else, necessarily suffered a simultaneous change; that nothing in it could be a free agent, like a god operating upon this universe from outer space, but that the very men who make an epoch are formed by the epoch in which they live, that their moral outlooks and their feelings are just as much products of the times as they themselves. Everything is relative: what passes for virtue in Paris will be considered vice in the Azores; nothing possesses a stable value; and people form their opinions of the world under stress of passion, as men appraise women. A writer cannot conjure up stability from the constant flux and change; he cannot do so precisely because he himself is a product, a creature of the age. His task must, therefore, be to depict the mental and spiritual conditions of his epoch, to show the interplay of the universal forces which stir the molecules to activity, which by turns bring them together and rend them apart. He must be a meteorologist of the social air-currents, a

mathematician of the will, an analytical chemist of the passions, a geologist who reveals the primal forms which go to the shaping of a nation. He must be a polyhistor; he must be a man who can penetrate the corporeal substance of his day, can hearken to what it has to divulge. He must be a collector of the facts, a painter of the landscapes, a crusader on behalf of the ideas, belonging to the period in which he lives. And to be all these was Balzac's supreme desire. That is why he laboured so indefatigably both at large-scale and at small-scale presentations.

Taine was right when he said that Balzac's work constituted the greatest warehouse of human documents it has been our privilege to delve in since Shakespeare's day. True, for his contemporaries and for many people of our own time, Balzac was no more than a writer of novels. Contemplated from this angle, he does not appear to be of such giant proportions. Few of his writings can be called "standard works." He must not be judged by individual books, but by the whole of his achievement. His many volumes must be contemplated as we contemplate a landscape, with its hills and dales, its far horizons, its treacherous cliffs, and its roaring torrents.

THE NOVEL AS AN ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF THE SOUL

With him began—and were it not for Dostoeffsky we might say "ended" as well—the concept of the novel as an encyclopædia of the inner universe. His predecessors knew of only two ways whereby the reluctant machinery of events could be set in motion: chance, acting from without; or love, working from within, and bringing a succession of erotic incidents in its train. Balzac showed the working of another prime motive force than the erotic. For him, desire assumed two aspects: love, in the true meaning of the word, affecting a few men and all women who happen to be born under its star, who live for love, and who die with their hearts still full of passion-fraught longing; and ambition. It was only the latter kind of desire that had genuine interest for him. But we owe a debt to Balzac's genius for having demonstrated that those energies which find release in eroticism are not the only species of impulses; that the vicissitudes of other passions are no whit less enthralling; that, without in any way scattering and wasting the primitive forces, desire can assume other forms than those of love and may contain other symbols for our enlightenment. Balzac, manipulating all the urges underlying human nature, was able to give them an amazing multiplicity of expression.

But he fed his novels with reality from an additional source. As portrayer of his contemporaries and as statistician of the relative, Balzac devoted the minutest study to

the moral, political, and æsthetic values of things. Above all, he paid close attention to those values which today constitute an almost universal standard and are regarded as wellnigh absolute. In a word, he investigated money values, and introduced them into his novels. Ever since the days when aristocratic privilege was abolished, ever since the vast differences of status were reduced to a general level of equality, money has come more and more to be the blood and the driving force of social life. Money value gradually came to determine all things; the worth of every passion was estimated in terms of the material sacrifices entailed; every human being was judged by what his income happened to be in hard cash. Money circulates in these novels. Balzac allows his heroes to accumulate vast fortunes, only to lose all in the end; he depicts frantic speculation on the stock exchange, mighty battles which entail as tremendous an expenditure of energy as did Leipzig or Waterloo; he presents us with a score of different types of money-grubber, those who are moved primarily by greed, or hate, or extravagance, or ambition, or what not; we see people who seek money for money's sake, others who love it because it is a symbol of something they greatly desire, and yet others who look upon it as a means to an end. Balzac was the first to demonstrate boldly and fearlessly that money dovetails into the noblest, the finest, the most spiritual of feelings.

All the persons of his novels calculate the cost of their actions, just as we, likewise, have willy-nilly to do. His ingénus on their first arrival in Paris know exactly how much a call on a society dame will cost them; they know that an expensive costume is necessary, elegant footwear, a carriage, a suitable apartment, a manservant, and a thousand trifles and frivolities. All this must be paid for; experience

costs money. They know how painfully embarrassing a coat which has not been well tailored may prove to be; they are fully aware that it is money alone, or the appearance of being wealthy, which will open the doors of society to them. The catastrophic possibility of being humiliated in the eyes of the world acts as a spur to their ambition, and arouses a passionate desire to make good. Balzac goes all the way with them. He calculates the total of the spendthrift's expenditure, reckons up the usurer's percentages, the merchant's profits, the dandy's debts, the amount of the bribe slipped into the hands of a venal politician.

Since money is the material precipitate of a universally prevalent ambition, since it permeates every emotion, Balzac, the pathologist of social life, had to recognize when the crisis was likely to occur in the ailing body of society, had to examine its blood under the microscope, and learn its monetary content. For life is permeated with money; it supplies oxygen to the lungs; none can do without it. The ambitious man needs it to gratify his ambition, the lover to serve his love. Least of all can the artist forgo it; and Balzac, burdened as he was for a lifetime with debts, knew this from bitter experience.

No one can afford to ignore Balzac's work. The eighty volumes which comprise his literary achievement, represent an epoch, a universe, a whole generation. Never before had so vast an enterprise been deliberately undertaken; never has the temerity of a man's unbounded will been better requited. He who, tired with the labours of the day, wishes to rest and enjoy himself, has but to take down one of these volumes, and a world of new pictures, of new acquaintances, opens up before his eyes. Here is excitement enough, to be sure, and a stirring play of circumstances;

dramatic situations fit to inspire a hundred playwrights. The man of science will find a satiety of problems to cudgel his brains withal, spread before him with lavish hand. The lover will receive a preparatory schooling for the ecstasy that is to come into his own life. But the most considerable legacy of all is left to the imaginative writer.

In the plans Balzac made for his *Comédie humaine,* we find that forty of the novels he had contemplated putting into the series were never written. One was to have been named "Moscou," another "La plaine de Wagram"; "Les paysans" was begun, but never finished. We might almost look upon it as a stroke of good fortune that the scheme remained incomplete. Balzac once said: "The man of genius is one who can invariably convert his thoughts into deeds. But the truly outstanding genius does not unremittingly allow this evolution to take place; if he did, he would be the equal of God." Had Balzac been able to complete his stupendous scheme, his work would have passed into the realm of the inconceivable. It would have become a monster, scaring subsequent writers by the magnitude of its inaccessibility. As it is, it acts as a stimulus without parallel, and serves as a magnificent example for all those whose creative will is pointed towards the unattainable.

DICKENS

(1812–1870)

We meet thee, like a pleasant thought,
When such is wanted.

WORDSWORTH

A WRITER LOVED MORE THAN ALL OTHERS

THE love Dickens's contemporaries lavished upon the creator of Pickwick is not to be assessed by accounts given in books and biographies. Love lives and breathes only in the spoken word. To get an adequate idea of the intensity of this love, one must catch (as I once caught) an Englishman old enough to have youthful memories of the days when Dickens was still alive. Preferably it should be someone who finds it hard even now to speak of him as Charles Dickens, choosing, rather, to use the affectionate nickname of "Boz." The emotion, tinged with melancholy, which these old reminiscences call up, gives us of a younger generation some inkling of the enthusiasm that inspired the hearts of thousands when the monthly instalments in their blue covers (great rarities, now) arrived at English homes. At such times, my old Dickensian told me, people would walk a long way to meet the postman when a fresh number was due, so impatient were they to read what Boz had to tell. They had hungered for this day ever since the previous month, hoping, wondering, disputing as to whether young Copperfield would marry Dora or Agnes, delighted at the prospect of Micawber having to face another crisis in his affairs, which they knew well enough he would get through safely with the help of hot punch and good temper. How could they be expected to wait patiently until the letter-carrier, lumbering along on an old nag, would ar-

rive with the solution of these burning problems? When the appointed hour came round, old and young would sally forth, walking two miles and more to the post office merely to have the issue sooner. On the way home they would start reading, those who had not the luck of holding the book looking over the shoulder of the more fortunate mortal; others would set about reading aloud as they walked; only persons with a genius for self-sacrifice would defer a purely personal gratification, and would scurry back to share the treasure with wife and child.

In every village, in every town, in the whole of the British Isles, and far beyond, away into the remotest parts of the earth where the English-speaking nations had gone to settle and colonize, Charles Dickens was loved. People loved him from the first moment when (through the medium of print) they made his acquaintance until his dying day. Never, during the whole course of the nineteenth century, was there so steadfast, so hearty a relationship between a writer and his fellow-countrymen. He shot up, like a rocket, into celebrity; but his fires never paled; his sun never lost its radiance.

Four hundred copies of the first instalment of *The Pickwick Papers* were printed. By the time the fifteenth appeared, the issues amounted to forty thousand. Mr. Pickwick very soon made his way into German homes. Hundreds, nay thousands of little volumes, costing no more than a groschen, sowed laughter and joy even in the saddest hearts. Little Nicholas Nickleby travelled to America, Australia, Canada, closely followed by Oliver Twist and the countless other characters created out of this inexhaustibly fertile brain. Today there are millions of copies of Dickens's books in circulation, big and small, thick and

thin, cheap issues for those whose purse is ill-lined, expensive volumes for the wealthy. In the United States, the collected works are sold at a price which, I fancy, is exceptional even for the most renowned of authors. But no matter the size or the price, all these books contain a treasure-house of laughter between their covers, laughter which bubbles over as soon as one turns the pages.

Such love as was given to Dickens is unexampled in the world of literature. If, in the course of his life, this devotion did not increase, it was merely because a maximum once attained is a maximum, in emotions no less than in material quantities. The first time Dickens gave a reading, the first time he came face to face with his public, was an occasion for an extraordinary demonstration. The hall was packed, people clambered up the pillars, crept under the platform, did incredible things in order to hear the voice of their beloved author. In the States, despite the wintry cold, people would camp in front of the box-office, catching what rest they could on the mattresses they had lugged along with them, satisfying their hunger with food brought to them by the waiters from a near-by restaurant. No hall proved large enough to accommodate the crowds, so that in the end a church in Brooklyn was converted into a huge reading room for this most popular of authors. Standing aloft in the pulpit, Dickens read the stories of Oliver Twist and of Little Nell.

Dickens's fame endured, eclipsing that of Walter Scott, and putting the genius even of Thackeray into the shade. And when at last the fires were quenched, when Dickens died, the whole of the English-speaking world mourned a common loss. People meeting casually in the street spoke of the event; the news passed from mouth to mouth. London

was crushed as if it had received tidings of a great defeat on the battlefield. His body was laid to rest between Shakespeare and Fielding, in Westminster Abbey, the Pantheon of England's mighty dead. Thousands came to honour his obsequies, and for days and weeks the simple stone bearing his name was covered with flowers and wreaths. Even today, more than half a century after his death, it is rare to find no blossoms on his grave, placed there by a grateful hand. His fame and the love he inspired have not faded with the passing of the years. Ever since the day when his fellow-countrymen and their American cousins bestowed on him the wonderful and unexpected gift of fame, Charles Dickens has been the best-loved and most honoured story-teller of the Anglo-Saxon commonwealth.

DICKENS AS THE EMBODIMENT OF THE ENGLISH TRADITION

Two things are needed to bring about so amazing a reaction to creative work, a reaction that was unprecedented both in the depth of the feelings it aroused and in the wide scope of its influence: the identification of a man of genius with the traditions of his epoch. These two elements are usually in sharp opposition, they are as antagonistic as fire and water. Indeed, we might say that such antagonism to the old tradition is a mark of the true genius, for a man of genius creates a tradition of his own. The man of genius and the epoch in which he lives are, as it were, two planets exchanging light, but circling in orbits that belong to separate sidereal systems. Their paths may intersect at times, but never merge.

Yet in the case of Dickens, we witness the almost incomprehensible phenomenon of the merging of two such disparate entities. Dickens was the only writer of the century whose outlook on life fully coincided with the spiritual needs of his day. His novels are an expression of Victorian taste, his work is the embodiment of English tradition. Dickens represents the humour, the philosophy, the morality, the æsthetics, the mental and artistic make-up, the peculiar and to us Germans often poignantly sympathetic outlook, of thirty million fellow-mortals on his side of the Channel. Can we regard him, Charles Dickens, as the "author" of these works? Are they not, rather, an embodiment

of the English spirit—a product of the strongest, richest, most highly individual and by this sign the most perilous of all modern cultures? Its vital energy cannot be estimated too highly. The Englishman is far more English than the German is German. The fact of being English does not merely colour the whole mentality; it penetrates into the very blood, regulating its flow, pulsing athwart the most intimate and secret recesses of the individual, permeating that which is the most primitively personal of all, namely the artistic impulse.

A British artist is more genuinely true to racial type than a German or a Frenchman. Every artist in the British Isles, every genuine artist that is to say, has for this very reason wrestled with the Briton within him; and yet, despite the ardour and the desperate energy they have brought to the combat, they have never succeeded in strangling the over-mastering tradition. For this tradition has struck deep roots; and he who would pluck what is essentially British out of his soul plucks at his own heart-strings and dies of his wound. A few noble spirits have striven to free themselves and to become citizens of the world. But those who in any way succeeded, were cold-shouldered by their fellow-countrymen. We have but to recall the fates of Byron, Shelley, and Oscar Wilde, to realize how true this is. They were ostracized in their lifetimes because they wished to exchange their British citizenship for world citizenship, because they gave frank expression to their hatred of the undying bourgeois elements in British life and character. But they only succeeded in tearing their own lives to tatters.

The British tradition is the most firmly rooted in the whole range of national traditions; it is likewise the most victorious, and for this very reason the most perilous where

art is concerned. It is dangerous because it is insidious: it is no frosty waste, unfriendly and inhospitable, but entices the stranger to the warm fireside, where he will experience the cosiest of comforts. At the same time it will fence him in with moral prejudices, which hamper and constrain, according ill with the free flight of artistic fancy. It is a modest dwelling, more than a little stuffy, protected from the storms of life, cheerful, friendly, and hospitable, a real home with all the fires of middle-class contentment alight. And yet it is a prison-house for those who yearn to make the world their home, for those who have the nomad spirit in their blood, to whom adventurous journeyings into limitless spaces are the sap of life. Dickens, however, was perfectly satisfied within the four walls of the English tradition. He felt at ease in this atmosphere, and never travelled beyond the frontiers of English art, morality, and æsthetics. No revolutionary was he. The artist in him never played traitor to the Englishman; and, indeed, as time went on, the artist's lineaments were merged in those of the Englishman. Dickens's creation is firmly rooted in the tradition of Old England, and rarely does it budge so much as an inch outside this circle of interests. But his work soars upward into unexpected heights, and the whole architectonic is delightful. His achievement is the unconscious expression of his country's aspirations metamorphosed into art. And when we study the intensity, the exceptional merits, and the missed opportunities, of his imaginative production, we are really contemplating these things as they manifest themselves in England herself.

MIDDLE-CLASS COMFORT AND CONTENTMENT

Dickens is, therefore, among imaginative writers, the supreme incorporation of the English tradition between the period of Napoleon's rise and fall (the heroic past) and the period of British imperialism (a glorious dream of the future). If he only attained the extraordinary heights he did, and not the sublimest pinnacles to which his genius had predestined him, this was not because England or the English race acted as an obstacle to his upward path, but because he was born out of due time, born into the Victorian era. Shakespeare, too, was the most superb literary and imaginative expression of his epoch; but his England, Elizabethan England, was a country full of youthful energy, eager for adventure, fresh in mind and spirit, ardent and vibrant, just beginning to stretch forth its vigorous hands to grasp at the imperium mundi. Shakespeare was the child of a century when deeds and strong will and energy were demanded of its sons. New horizons were opening; in America, vast wealth was to be obtained; the hereditary foe had been crushed; the Renaissance was flashing beacon lights over land and sea from Italy into the northern isles of mist; a religion had been defeated; the world was ready to receive new and living values. Shakespeare was the incarnation of a heroic England; Dickens was the symbol of the middle classes. He, too, was the loyal subject of a queen, but a queen of quite another quality, a woman of gentle, housewifely,

unpretentious character, good old Queen Victoria; he was the citizen of a prudish, comfortable, well-ordered State, a State lacking verve and passionate enthusiasms.

Dickens's flight into the empyrean was impeded by the leaden weight of an epoch which was no longer hungry, but merely wished to digest. Gentle breezes played on the sails of his boat and did not carry him away from the English coast in search of unknown beauties and the pathless regions of the infinite. He is cautious, keeps always to that which is familiar and has been sanctioned by long usage. Just as Shakespeare embodied the courage of an England greedy for power and expansion, so Dickens represents the prudence natural to a country which has got what it wants. At the very moment when Dickens first saw the light, in 1812, a darkness had begun to spread over the world; a great fire had been extinguished, a fire that had threatened to consume the amorphous framework of the European States. The Guards of Napoleon's army had been broken against the British infantry at Waterloo; England had been saved, and had escorted the beaten foe to a far-off island in a desolate sea, to eke out his days deprived of crown and power. Dickens had not been there to witness the rise of the fiery comet, he had not seen the light shining across the skies of the world, nor the fiery glimmer which arose simultaneously from the extremities of Europe as witness to forces that were to combine to destroy the conqueror. His eyes opened to behold nothing but the mist-wreaths of his native isle.

The youth was launched into a world whose heroes were all dead. A few there were, even in England, who would not believe this thing. In their enthusiasm they would gladly have put a spoke in the wheel of time's chariot,

would gladly have recaptured the zest of earlier days; but England, desiring peace and quiet, thrust these insurgent sons from her. They fled her shores, and sought the lands where romance still had a home; they tried to rekindle the flames; but fate was too strong for them. Shelley was drowned in the waters of the Tyrrhenian sea; Byron was struck down by fever at Missolonghi: the days for heroic adventures had passed beyond recall. The earth had put on a sober livery.

England was feasting upon the blood-stained booty: the burgher, the merchant, the broker, reigned supreme, and lolled at ease upon the throne as if it were a couch. England was digesting her repast. In those days, if an art was to please, it had to be digestible. It must not disturb, or agitate the feelings; it was expected to stroke you gently, or tickle you; it could be sentimental, but not tragic. No one wanted to tremble and shudder as if a flash of lightning had pierced to the heart, making the breath stick in the throat and the blood run cold. These horrors were things only too familiar in the everyday life of the recent past, when the newspapers had brought tidings of events taking place in France, or Russia, or elsewhere. To be made to feel a little creepy was all right. The story of the ups and downs of quiet people's lives was permissible. What was wanted at that time was a fireside art; books that could be read comfortably while the winds howled outside and the rain battered against the window-panes; stories that could be enjoyed at one's own warm hearth, while the flames leaped and crackled safely in the grate; an art that sent a glow all over the body as did a fragrant cup of tea, not one that would thrill the heart with fierce intoxication. The conquerors of yesteryear have become so pusillanimous that they are even frightened at

the possibility of arousing their own strong feelings. All they want now is to keep and to hold; the times for doughty deeds and Odysseys are gone. In the books they read, just as in their everyday life, they wish for tempered passions; they have no desire for ecstasy, wanting merely to experience normal emotions that will run a demure course. For the English at that time, happiness and peaceful rumination were identical assets; æsthetics spelt morality, and morality meant prudery; the consciousness of nationality signified loyalty to the sovereign and the British constitution; love was regarded as synonymous with marriage. All the values of life had become anæmic. England was content and desired no change.

If an art is to find acceptance in a nation so self-satisfied as England then was, it needs must be content and satisfied likewise; it must sing the praises of the extant social order, not endeavour to soar above and beyond. And a genius arose to express this urge towards a comfortable, friendly, cheerful, and easily digestible art; just as once before, in the Elizabethan era, a Shakespeare had been born to voice very different aspirations. Dickens was the incorporation of the artistic needs of the England of his day. And precisely because he happened to be born at that time, he fulfilled his nation's requirements, and therewith ascended the ladder of fame. It was a tragedy for him, however, that the nation's needs in his day should have been what they were. His art was nourished upon the hypocritical moral code of a well-fed England which desired nothing so much as to be comfortable. Were it not for the outstanding powers of the author's imagination, did not his delectable sense of humour pervade and irradiate the vapid emotional content of the work, his achievement would have had value for the Eng-

lish world of that day alone. His novels would have meant no more to us than a thousand others of his own land and century. It is only when one is able to hate the insincerity and narrow-mindedness of the Victorian era with one's whole heart and soul, that one can fully appreciate the amazing genius of the man who could make interesting this smug and detestable world, make it not only interesting but even lovable, turning the most platitudinous and prosy of social outlooks and conditions into living poetry.

Dickens himself never fought against this England of his. Yet in the depths of his unconscious, the artist was at war with the Englishman. At first he had stepped forward sure-footed and strong; but little by little he sank into the soft, yielding sands of his day, becoming weary, until at last he was satisfied to walk easily along the beaten trail, the broad trackway left by the old tradition of his country. Conquered by the spirit of his time, Dickens always reminds me of Gulliver in the land of the Lilliputians. While the giant slept, the little folk fastened him down to the ground with a thousand "slender ligatures," nor did they loose him till he had promised to conform in all things to the laws of the country. In like manner, during his slumber as an unknown person, English tradition had pegged Dickens down and prisoned him; and his success tied him the firmer to the English soil, for with success came celebrity, and, once famous, his hands were thenceforth bound.

After a somewhat dreary childhood, he found a job as shorthand reporter in parliament, trying his luck occasionally in writing little sketches with a view to increasing his modest earnings rather than from any spontaneous urge towards creative work. But his first attempt proved success-

ful, and he was asked for more of the same kind. Then a publisher approached him with the proposal that he should write humorous and satirical articles concerning the adventures of an imaginary sporting club, which should be to a certain extent the text for making fun of the English gentry of the day. Dickens decided to accept the offer, and, after modifying the scheme to one more in conformity with his own tastes and aptitudes, he produced the first instalment of *The Pickwick Papers*. The success it obtained was unprecedented; two months later, Boz had become a national figure. He developed the original idea, and Pickwick became the hero of a strange kind of novel, which, in its turn, was a notable success. The meshes of the net were being drawn tighter; quietly and surely Dickens's reputation was placing invisible fetters upon him. One success led to another, and forced him more and more surely to follow the drift of his contemporaries' tastes.

The million-meshed net of applause, success, and the personal pride of the artist in his achievement, was henceforward to bind him fast within the sphere of English limitations, and to ensure that he should never transgress the æsthetic and moral code of his homeland. Thus he remained for ever the captive of British tradition, of bourgeois tastes, a modern Gulliver among the Lilliputians. His wonderful imagination, which like an eagle might have soared high above and beyond this narrow earth, was chained by the feet to the rock of success. His artistic aspirations were burdened by a deep feeling of contentment. For Dickens was, indeed, content. Content with the world, with England, with his contemporaries—and they with him. Neither he nor they wanted things otherwise. There was no wrath in his heart, urging him to stir up, to goad, to uplift;

that basic impulse of most great artists to argue things out with the deity, never arose in him; nor had he any desire to overthrow the world and bray it to pieces in order that he might fashion it anew. Dickens was pious, and was filled with the fear of God; he felt a kindly admiration for the existing order, had a pleasurable delight in it that was child-like, innocent, and playful. Yes, he was content. His wants were few and simple.

None the less, he had a vocation. Once upon a time he had been a poor, unknown wight, scorned of destiny, labouring at ill-paid tasks such as fall to the lot of the young. The iron had gone home. His childhood had been a tragically pitiful experience; but it was during these tender years that the seed of creative fancy had been sown, and had taken root in the fecund soil of suffering stoically endured. When the day of his power arrived and he saw that an opportunity was presenting itself for him to exercise a wide influence upon his contemporaries, he vowed he would take a noble vengeance for the bitter experiences of his own youthful days. His novels should be the instrument for helping the poor, forsaken, and forgotten children who, like himself of old, were suffering injustice at the hands of teachers, badly conducted schools, indifferent parents; who were pining away because of the slothfulness, the lack of affection, the selfishness of their natural protectors and guardians. He wanted to capture a few of the fragrant flowers of childhood for these little ones, blossoms which for lack of the refreshing dew of kindliness had for him withered ere he had been able to enjoy them. In later years, life lavished her favours upon him, and reproach died out of his heart; nevertheless, memories of his own childhood made him the champion of children till the end. His unique

purpose in life, the resolve which animated his will as an artist, was to succour the weak: in this one point he wished to see an improvement in the social order. But he did not inveigh against established institutions, or shake his fist in the face of his generation, or threaten the lawgivers and citizens who were responsible; he did not denounce the mendacity inherent in social conventions; what he did was to point a wary finger towards an open wound.

At that date, Britain was the only country that had not experienced the throes of the revolutionary movements of 1848. It was natural, therefore, that it should never enter Dickens's head to want to overthrow the constitution and begin afresh; what he wished to do was to correct and improve the existing order, to tone down and ameliorate the phenomena of social injustice when they had become too acute and too painful: but he had no intention to dig them up and destroy them like foul weeds. True to his nationality, he did not dare tamper with the foundations of morality; these were as sacrosanct as the Bible.

Contentedness, the distillate of the vapid emotional make-up of his epoch, was Dickens's fundamental characteristic. He did not ask much of life; nor did his heroes. Balzac's heroes were greedy for power and dominance; they were eaten up with ambition; they were never satiated; each wished to conquer the world, to overthrow the existing scheme of things; they were anarchists and tyrants; they had Napoleonic temperaments. Dostoeffsky's heroes, too, were filled with ardour and ecstasy; with indomitable wills, they spurned the everyday world, and, magnificently dissatisfied, they stormed forward beyond the life of spurious reality into the truer life beyond; they had no desire to be citizens, ordinary human beings; inspiring them all,

flashing athwart an outward semblance of meekness, was a pride fraught with many dangers—the determination to be saviours, redeemers. Balzac's heroes would gladly have subjugated the world: Dostoeffsky's heroes wished to transcend it. Both were resolved to outsoar a humdrum environment; they were like arrows speeding into the infinite. Dickens's types, on the other hand, were modest in their claims. What was the acme of their desires? A few hundred pounds a year, an amiable wife, a dozen children, a well-appointed table and succulent meats to entertain their friends withal, a cottage not too far from London, the windows giving a view over the green countryside, a pretty little garden, and a modicum of happiness. Their ideal was a middle-class respectability. We have to make up our minds to this when we embark on a novel by Dickens. None of his characters want to see a change in the ordering of the world; they desire neither poverty nor riches; they are satisfied with a middling amount of this life's goods—a maxim so prudent and wise where shopkeepers and petty men of business are concerned, and yet one full of risk for an artist. Dickens's ideals took their colour from the atmosphere of the day. The creator behind the work, he who was to bring a universe out of chaos, was not a wrathful deity, gigantic and supra-human, but a contented observer, a loyal cit. The whole entourage of Dickens's novels is one of bourgeois smugness.

APOTHEOSIS OF THE COMMONPLACE

In what, then, did his mighty and unforgettable achievement consist? He discovered the romantic element that lay perdu in the bourgeoisie; he unveiled the poetry that was ambushed in the prosaic. The commonplaces in the life of all the nations of the earth, these matter-of-fact ingredients, were converted by him into something imaginative, fanciful, entrancing. He flooded the grey mass with sunshine. Anyone who has been in England and who has witnessed the emergence of the sun after rain, the glorious brightness which pierces through the clouds and the fog so suddenly, filling sky and earth with effulgence, will realize the kind of welcome accorded by his compatriots to an author who is able by his art to grant a similar moment of joyful release from the leaden gloom of their lives. Dickens spread a golden halo about this humdrum existence; he gave to simple things and unpretentious people a glory all their own; he created an idyll for the English. He sought his characters in the narrow streets of the suburbs which were growing up round the big towns, he explored regions which by his predecessors in the world of literature had been given the go-by. The latter had found their inspiration in the mansions of the wealthy, beneath scintillating chandeliers; or in the world of the fairies; or in remote corners of the globe, among the unusual and the extraordinary. The worthy burgher was for them the very incarnation of

all that was ponderous and earthy: what they enjoyed depicting was the fiery, sumptuous, aspiring soul, the lyrical and heroic man. But Dickens was not ashamed of making a simple wage-earner into one of his heroes. He was a "self-made man," having risen from an environment he never ceased to regard with filial piety. His enthusiastic delight in the commonplace was amazing, and no less astonishing was his appreciation of quite worthless and old-fashioned things and the small change of life. His books are veritable curiosity shops stuffed with a queer jumble of gimcracks, which ordinary mortals would look upon as valueless; they are a medley of strangely useless drolleries and nullities which for decades had been awaiting a purchaser. But when he took these ancient, worthless, dusty things in hand, when he cleaned them and polished them, ranged them side by side in an orderly way, then they sparkled and glittered in the radiant sunshine of his cheerfulness. They shone with renewed and unsuspected brightness.

Thus he took the many despised and petty emotions of the human heart, studied their workings, assembled their machinery, and set them pulsating with renewed life. They would start gently to hum, to murmur; and, finally, they would softly sing some long-forgotten melody, sweeter and lovelier by far than the dreary ballads of the knights from a legendary past or the songs of the Lady of the Lake. Dickens, as it were, lifted the whole bourgeois world from the ash-heap on which it lay, and built it up of old, forgotten, far-off things from days of long ago. In his works these things were born anew into a living world. By kindly forbearance, he made their foolishnesses and limitations understandable; by his love, he brought their beauties out into the light; their superstitions, he changed into a fresh

and imaginative mythology. The chirp of a cricket on the hearth became music in his books, the bells ringing the old year out and the new year in had tongues to tell a tale, the magic of Christmas reconciled the spirit of poesy with the spirit of religion. To the smallest festivity he was able to give a deep significance, and to these simple folk he could reveal all that their grey lives held of poetry and romance, was able to enhance their love for that which they already loved above all else in the world—their homes, with the cosy room, the fire crackling on the hearth, the logs spluttering and hissing, the tea-table, and the kettle singing on the hob; home, which shut them safely away from ravening storms and the mad, bad world without. He wished to teach this poem of everyday life to all and sundry, but especially to those condemned to pass the whole of their existence in the realm of the commonplace. To thousands, nay to millions, he revealed where to find the everlasting spark in their uneventful lives, where to look for the glow of quiet joy hidden beneath the ashes of the familiar; he taught them how to fan the spark into a cheery and grateful blaze.

He wanted to help the children and the downtrodden. On the other hand, anything, whether material or spiritual, which rose above the middle-class stratum of life, was antipathetic to him. His whole heart was given to the ordinary, to the average. The wealthy, and people of aristocratic birth, all the spoiled darlings at life's table, were obnoxious to him. In his books, persons of this class are almost invariably scoundrels and niggards; he does not give us portraits of them, but caricatures. He simply couldn't abide them. As a youngster, he had seen his "prodigal father" go to jail for debt; had been taken to visit the old man in the Marshalsea; had blacked boots, had carried things to

the pawnshop, and had come to know only too well the wretchedness and degradation lack of money entails. For over a year he earned his living in a blacking warehouse at Old Hungerford Stairs, tying, trimming, and labelling the pots, hundreds a day, until his little hands were hot and aching, and he was sore put to it to keep back the burning tears. How well he remembered the gnawings of an empty stomach, he who had every morning gone forth to work, through the dank and fog of the London streets, without a morsel in his small belly to comfort him! There was no one who could give him a helping hand; carriages clattered by as the lad shivered with cold, riders on horseback trotted past; but no rich man's door ever opened to give him shelter and warmth.

And yet kindliness and generosity were bestowed on him at times—by humble folk who were themselves nipped by poverty; and them he was in the future to requite with his gratitude. His work is eminently democratic—not socialist, to be sure; he had no mind for radical change. It is woven of love and compassion, and these two qualities endow it with a pathos most disquieting at times. His favourite dwelling place was in the genteel, lower-middle-class stratum of society, in that realm which lies somewhere between the workhouse and the mansions of the well-to-do. Here he felt comfortable, at his ease. He paints the rooms with breadth, giving them cosiness and snugness, as if he intended to take up his quarters in them himself; he weaves the destinies of these simple folk out of sunshine; he dreams their dreams; he is their champion, their preacher, their darling, the radiant and inextinguishable orb which warms their drab and unpretentious universe.

How rich this universe became under his magic wand!

How wonderfully transfigured was the modest reality of petty existences! The whole of this community, with its dwellings and furnishings, its medley of trades and callings and professions, its limitless mishmash of emotions, became a cosmos under his hand, became an integral whole, with its own stars, and its own household gods. Treasures were unearthed from the seeming monotony and stagnation; his keen vision sought them out, and brought them into the light of day. From the flaccid waters he fished up human beings—sufficient, indeed, to people a city! Among these characters, unforgettable figures stand forth, figures that will endure the test of time, everlasting in the realm of literature, their sayings and their names having long since become proverbial and forming part of the national speech. Pickwick and Sam Weller, Pecksniff and Betsy Trotwood —names that magically call up smiling memories.

How vast is the wealth his books contain! David Copperfield's adventures alone would have supplied an ordinary mortal with material for a lifetime. Dickens's works are real novels as far as abundance of material and unremitting activity are concerned; they are not, like nearly all our German novels, merely psychological sketches or short stories that have been stretched and padded out to make them bulk as novels. There is never a dead point in Dickens's books, never any empty, sandy wastes; the ebb and flow of their events is full and regular; like the ocean, they are fathomless, and reach farther than the eye can see. Indeed it is difficult to survey in one glance this multitude of cheerful and busy individuals; they throng the stage of the heart, elbowing one another aside, pushing their way to the front, passing along to yield ground to fresh arrivals. They approach, like rollers from the Atlantic, emerging from

the tentacular towns and breaking in spume upon the rocks of events; others arrive, wave upon wave of them, curving and crashing, swallowing one another up, catching the unwary in their backwash: yet their movements are not the result of chance; behind the apparent confusion, order reigns. The warp and woof of these countless lives are dexterously woven together into a gaily coloured carpet. Even if a character does no more than stalk across the stage, he is not brought on for nothing, he is not lost sight of. Every event and every figure has its purpose, lends completeness to the whole, contributes its quota of light and shade. Crisp, or merry, or serious, the happenings chase one another like kittens at play; the shuttlecock of events is ever on the go; within a few pages he runs up and down the whole gamut of the emotions; all of life's possibilities are blended by the subtle hand of the master: joy, horror, and arrogance; tears welling up from deeply stirred hearts, or flooding the face in sheer delight. Clouds pack away, only to form again, lowering, and to break up anew. At length the storms are past, and in the purified air the sun shines again, bright and wonderful.

AMAZING POWERS OF VISUALIZATION

MANY of the novels are veritable Iliads, describing thousands of individual struggles, Iliads of a terrestrial world whence the gods have fled; others, again, are peaceful and modest idylls; all of them, the best as well as the worst, have this in common: we are confronted with a lavish and spendthrift multiplicity. Another feature, a feature we find even in the gloomiest and the most untamed of his books, is that no matter how tragical the landscape, from time to time we encounter certain endearing details peeping at us like delicate blossoms from the chinks of rugged rocks. These unforgettable and charming details flower in every nook and cranny; like wild, sweet-smelling violets, modestly hiding under leaves, they await our coming as we saunter through the wide stretches of print; we meet with springs of cheerfulness at every turn, gushing careless and gay from out the hard rocks of circumstance. There are whole chapters in Dickens's works that are only comparable to a countryside, the effect they produce on us is so fresh and pure, so divinely unsullied by earthly moil, so sunny and fragrant with serene human kindliness. Were it for these passages alone, we cannot help loving the man who has bestowed them upon us with such generous hands.

I wonder if anyone has ever been able to give an account of all the characters that make their bow to us in his books.

And what a jovial, merry, good-humoured crowd they are, always ready for a laugh, invariably amusing. There they are, drawn to the life, with their crotchets and whims and peculiarities, their strange callings, their delicious adventures. Though they are legion, not one resembles the other. We are given the minutest of personal details; they are not mere sketches, but the liveliest of mortals, their senses fully developed. They are not the figments of a fertile imagination, but real flesh-and-blood human beings, created and formed by the incomparable insight and understanding of this poet.

His powers of penetration are almost miraculous. Dickens was a visualizing genius. Look at the portraits we have of him in youth and, better still, as an elderly man. The whole countenance is dominated by those wonderful eyes. They are not the eyes of an inspired poet, they do not roll in a fine frenzy or veil themselves behind an elegiac melancholy, they are not soft and yielding in expression, nor are they the fiery orbs of a visionary. They are essentially English eyes: cold, grey, sharp, like steel. They were steely as a safe within which a treasure is locked, whence it cannot be stolen or lost, where neither fire nor air can penetrate to destroy; and this treasure consisted of all that he had observed once and put away, yesterday or many years ago—the sublimest side by side with the most trivial of items. It might be merely a sign over a shop which had caught his attention as a little chap of five; or a tree with its fresh young leaves nodding in at the window. Nothing escaped these eyes; they were stronger than time; carefully, laboriously, they hoarded impression upon impression in the storehouses of memory, ready for the day when the master should have need of them. Nothing dribbled away into for-

getfulness, nothing became pale or blurred; everything lay there awaiting his good time, full of the sap of life, colourful and distinct; nothing died or faded. This visual memory of Dickens's was unparalleled.

He cuts through the fog surrounding the years of childhood like a clipper driving through the waves. In *David Copperfield*, that masked autobiography, we are given reminiscences of a two-year-old child concerning his mother with her pretty hair and youthful shape, and Peggotty with no shape at all; memories which are like silhouettes standing out from the blank of his infancy. There are never any blurred contours where Dickens is concerned; he does not give us hazy visions, but portraits whose every detail is sharply defined. His powers of depiction are so overwhelming that the reader is not called upon for any effort of imagination—and this goes far to explain the vogue his books enjoyed with a nation that did not shine by its imaginative faculties. Place them in the hands of twenty different illustrators and demand a portrait of Copperfield or of Pickwick. What will be the result? We shall be given twenty pictures almost incredibly similar, showing us a kindly old gentleman in a white waistcoat, tights and gaiters, and a pair of beaming eyes twinkling behind glasses; or a shy, fair-haired lad sitting upon the box-seat of the Yarmouth coach. Dickens portrays so clearly, so minutely, that his readers sees what he makes them see, much as if he had hypnotized them. His is not the wizard's eye of a Balzac which allows the characters at first to struggle out of chaos and to take shape by slow degrees amid the fiery welter of their passions. Dickens's vision is a purely terrestrial one; it has something of the seaman's keenness, of the hunter's alertness, of the falcon's sharpness of discernment, for the

tiniest human foibles and virtues. But, as he himself once said, it is the little things that give meaning to life. He is, therefore, perpetually on the watch for tokens, be they never so slight; a spot of grease on a dress, an awkward gesture caused by shyness, a strand of reddish hair peeping from beneath a wig if its wearer happens to lose his temper. He captures all the nuances of a handshake, knows what the pressure of each finger signifies; detects the shades of meaning in a smile.

Before he took to the career of a writer, he was parliamentary reporter for a newspaper. In this capacity he became proficient in the art of summary, in compressing long-winded discussions; as shorthand writer he conveyed a word by a stroke, a whole sentence by a few curves and dashes. So in later days as an author he invented a kind of shorthand to reality, consisting of little signs instead of lengthy descriptions, an essence of observation distilled from the innumerable happenings of life. He has an uncannily sharp eye for the detection of these insignificant externals; he never overlooks anything; his memory and his keenness of perception are like a photographic plate which, in the hundredth part of a second, fixes the least expression, the slightest gesture, and yields a perfectly precise negative. Nothing escapes his notice. In addition, this perspicacious observation is enhanced by a marvellous power of refraction which, instead of presenting an object as merely reflected in its ordinary proportions from the surface of a mirror, gives us an image clothed in an excess of characteristics. For he invariably underlines the personal attributes of his characters, drawing these peculiarities out of the realm of the objective and placing them in that of caricature. By rendering these characteristics more intense, he transforms them into

symbols. The rotundity of a Pickwick is an outward and visible sign of his psychical plumpness; Jingle's leanness expresses his inner aridity; evil becomes satanical; good puts on flesh and fullness.

All great artists exaggerate, and Dickens is no exception to the rule. But his exaggeration tends towards humour rather than towards the grandiose. His whole diverting method of presentation arises, not so much from caprice on his part, or from playfulness, as from the exceptional angle whence he chooses to contemplate the world about him. Things impinge upon his retina with exceptional distinctness, over-distinctness one might say, so that they easily get transformed into marvels and caricatures by the time they are reflected back upon life.

This extraordinary optical faculty amounted to genius in Dickens. He cannot, as a matter of fact, be regarded as a great psychologist. Not his the special power of one who plumbs the depths of men's minds, to find there the seeds of light or of darkness, out of which to conjure up the shapes and colours of things, as if able to stimulate a mysterious process of growth. His psychology began with the visible; he gained his insight into character by observation of the exterior—the most delicate and fine minutiæ of the outward semblance, it is true, those utmost tenuosities which only the eyes that are rendered acute by a superlative imagination can perceive. Like the English philosophers, he does not begin with assumptions and suppositions, but with characteristics. He lays hold of the most inconspicuous and corporeal expressions of the soul, and by the magic of his method of caricature, he brings the whole personality visibly and palpably before our eyes. Through traits, he discloses types: Creakle had no voice, but spoke in a whis-

per; the exertion speech cost him, or the consciousness of talking in that feeble way, made his angry face much more angry, and his thick veins much thicker. Even as we read the description, the sense of terror the boys felt at the approach of this fiery blusterer becomes manifest in us as well. Uriah Heep's hands are damp and cold; we experience a loathing for the creature at the very outset, as though we were faced by a snake. Small things? Externals? Yes, but they invariably are such as to recoil upon the soul. At times he describes a trait which is no more than a crotchet, but he makes it live, makes it pervade the character, setting that character in motion as if a series of strings were animating a marionette. Again, a man or a woman is indirectly made plainer to us by a detailed account of a companion—man, bird, or beast. We learn more of Pickwick from the study of Sam Weller, of Dora from Jip, of Barnaby from his raven, of Kit from Whisker, the rough-coated pony. Here the originals are reflected in their grotesque shadows.

Dickens's characters, then, appeal to the senses more than to the intellect or the emotions. To the eye, they are clear-cut; but to the inner vision, sometimes, they seem vague; and their effect on our feelings is apt to be disproportionately small. When we call to mind a character from Balzac or Dostoeffsky, Père Goriot or Raskolnikoff let us say, their very names give rise to an emotional response; we remember the self-sacrifice of the former, and the despairing chaos of passion in the latter. But mention the word Pickwick, and the mental eye is immediately presented with a jovial old gentleman, his embonpoint well accentuated, gilt buttons on his coat. We fancy we are contemplating a painting in oils when we call to mind a Dickens

character, whereas with Balzac and Dostoeffsky the effect is more like that of listening to music. For the Frenchman and the Russian create, whereas the Englishman reproduces. Dickens does not discern the souls of his characters where they rise out of the night of the unconscious, where their being is exclusively spiritual; he perceives the immaterial fluid in the region where it comes into touch with the world, he fixes his gaze on the thousandfold workings of the mind on the body—but none of these escape him. His imagination is physical, visual, and is, therefore, only competent to deal with the emotions and types appertaining to the earthly sphere; his people have plasticity and vitality only in the temperate region of normal emotion. As soon as we enter the torrid zone of the passions, the drama melts like wax and becomes mere sentimentality; or it gets petrified into hatred, and shows conspicuous flaws. The most successful of his types are the perfectly straightforward ones; he is not happy in his depiction of those far more interesting natures which stand on the borderland of good and evil, which have elements of the divine intermingling with the satanic. That is why there is a certain measure of justification for the frequent criticism that in Dickens's books, as on the Day of Judgment, all men and women must be classed as "good" or "bad," and herded unhesitatingly with the sheep or the goats. The assertion is unduly facile, and exceptions will present themselves to the mind of any intelligent and sympathetic reader. Still, it is true that as a student of character Dickens simplifies unduly. His methods never lead him along the path which runs away into the world of mysterious interconnexions, and of mystical chains of events. Thither his genius might have led him, had not he been dragged back, ever and again, by the force of the national

tradition! It is the tragedy of his life, as it is the explanation of his success, that he is constrained to walk along the beaten track, his feet firmly planted on the earth; forced to dwell in the corporeal, the comprehensible, the comfortable environment of bourgeois existence.

DICKENS AS MELODRAMATIST AND MORALIST

I HAVE described Dickens as "content," yet in a sense he was never satisfied with his work. He was famous—but he had not won his fame as a writer of tragedy. With ever-renewed spirit he sought to rise to tragic levels, and time after time he merely attained to melodrama. The frontier line of his powers was clearly drawn. His attempts to cross it were invariably lamentable. English readers may find *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Bleak House* works of high creative power; for us Germans they are damned, because the great moments in them are forced. And yet the author's endeavour to be genuinely tragical is commendable: he heaps plot upon plot; he overwhelms his heroes with catastrophes as crushing as rock-falls; he calls the terrors of rainy nights to his aid; he brings in mob riots and revolution, lets loose all the furies of horror and disaster. But the reader experiences no more than a slight shiver down the back; a purely physical reflex, not the shudder of the soul. We are never profoundly shaken while reading his books; their storms do not wreak havoc in our souls so that from sheer agony of tension the heart yearns for the lightning to flash forth and in the crash of thunder to find release. Dickens confronts us with peril after peril; yet we are in no way alarmed. When we read Dostoeffsky we sometimes gasp for breath as an abyss of disaster suddenly opens at our feet; one feels this terrific chasm, so dark and fathomless,

as if it were gaping in one's own breast. The earth seems to be slipping from under the feet; one is seized with giddiness, a giddiness strangely woven of fire and sweetness; one longs to plunge headlong into the void, and yet one shudders at uncanny feelings of pleasure and pain, heated to such a white heat that they are almost impossible to differentiate. True, in Dickens likewise, we meet with abysses. He fills them with gloom, he depicts their dangers—and yet the shudder does not come; one does not get the thrill of that plunge into fathomless depths, that feeling which is perhaps the climax of artistic enjoyment. We are always safe with Dickens, as if we were holding a banister, for we know beforehand that he will not let us fall; we know that the hero will not come to grief in the end; the twin angels, compassion and justice, who are never absent from the skies of this English author, will see to it that he comes scatheless through all his troubles. Dickens does not possess the brutality essential to give a writer courage to tackle the really great tragedies of life. He is not heroic, but sentimental. Tragedy is a will to defiance; sentimentality is a longing for tears. Dickens was never able to reach the shores where dwell the tearless, wordless, ultimate powers of despairing pain. The extremest feeling he is able to arouse is one of gentle sympathy, as over the death of Dora in *David Copperfield*. Even when he has summoned up mightier emotions, he invariably calms the storm by pouring the oil (often rancid!) of compassion upon the waves. The traditional sentimentality of the English novel curbs his flight towards the magnificent. For in England, the events taking place in a novel must serve to illustrate the current moral code; and at that time the burden of the song of destiny was: "Always be true and straightforward!" We come back

to our sheep and our goats. The finale must be a last judgment wherein the good shall rise to glory everlasting, and the bad go down to eternal punishment. Unfortunately Dickens could not withstand this trend: his rogues get drowned, or kill one another; the proud and wealthy are ruined; the hero sits cosily at home by the fire. Even today, the English find it hard to tolerate real drama, unless in the end it leaves them with the pleasant feeling that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. This typically English hypertrophy of the moral sense is responsible for the fact that Dickens's grandest and noblest inspirations fall flat, that he is never able to give us a tragedy in the sublimest sense of the word.

The philosophy underlying his works, the philosophy which is built into their very foundations and upon which their entire architectural strength depends, is not the philosophy of a free artist but that of an Anglican citizen. Dickens claps a censorship on to the emotions, instead of allowing them free vent; he does not, as does Balzac, permit them to overflow their banks, but guides them through locks and channels and dykes where they turn the mills of the bourgeois moral code. Parsons, preachers, common-sense philosophers, schoolmasters, and the like, seem to be looking over his shoulder as he composes; each has a finger in the pie; they prevail upon him to make his novel an example and a warning to the young people of his day, instead of letting him develop his ideas along the lines of an unfettered reality. He submitted—and he got his reward. When he died, the Bishop of Winchester declared with pride that Dickens's works could unhesitatingly be placed in the hands of any child. But this is what detracts from his achievement, this is what cuts the glory from his magnif-

icent gifts—the fact that his books do not describe life as it really is, but only as a bishop would like to have it presented to children! For any but the English, these novels are too abundantly larded with moral reflections and sermon-stuff. To fulfil Dickens's conception of a hero, one must be an embodiment of virtue. His is a puritanical ideal. Fielding and Smollett, Englishmen too, but sons of a cheerfully sensuous generation, were not at all alarmed when one of their heroes smashed another man's nose at a jollification, or when, in spite of an ardent affection for an exalted dame, they occasionally chose to sleep with her abigail. But Dickens does not permit even his villains to perpetuate such indecencies. His very debauchees are careful not to misbehave in a way that would bring the blush to a spinster's cheek as she sits reading the story at her cosy hearthside. Dick Swiveller is a libertine? Yes, but in what consists his "libertinage"? He puts away four glasses of ale instead of two, is not quite to be trusted when he is adding up his accounts, loafs now and then instead of attending strictly to business —and that is about all. In the end, and just at the opportune moment, he comes into a legacy (a very small one, of course), and in a highly respectable fashion marries the lass who has helped him along the path of virtue. Dickens cannot make even his "goats" genuinely rascally, genuinely immoral; their blood runs pale despite their evil instincts. This pretence that there is no such thing as a life of the senses unalloyed, brands the whole of his work; squint-eyed hypocrisy, which pretends not to see what it does not want to see, turns Dickens's penetrating eyes away from reality. The England of the Victorian era was to blame for the circumstance that this great writer never wrote the tragedy of which his talents were capable, and

which, in very truth, he secretly yearned to write. Inevitably he would have been dragged down into the prevailing mediocrity, his popularity would have debased him to become the advocate of his contemporaries' mendacity where sexual morals were concerned, had it not been for a world whither his creative aspirations could flee for sanctuary, had he not been equipped with silvery pinions which enabled him to soar above the mean, dull levels of expediency, had he not been endowed with such an inexhaustible, serene, almost unearthly sense of humour.

A LAND OF CHILDHOOD

This halcyon world, into which the fogs of the island realm could not penetrate, was the land of childhood. English hypocrisy blinked at the life of carnal desires, forcing the adult sons and daughters of Britain to assume a virtue if they had it not. But children could still, like their primal parents in the Garden of Eden, give simple expression to their feelings; they were not yet "English," but little beautiful human flowers; the mist-wreaths of British hypocrisy had not yet obscured their skies. In this realm, where Dickens was free to do as he liked, unhampered by the dictates of his English conscience, he accomplished imperishable things. The parts of his books where he is describing the years of childhood are invariably beautiful. I do not believe that these figures can ever fall into oblivion, nor will those merry and serious episodes of youthful days ever be forgotten. Who, indeed, could forget Little Nell's wanderings when, with her old grandfather, she has shaken the dust of London off her feet, and has set forth in search of green fields, leaving the army of bricks and mortar behind? Innocent and gentle, her angel smile carries her over dangers and obstacles until death brings release. We are deeply moved by this child's story; our emotion far transcends sentimentality, for it awakens the most genuine and lively of all human feelings. Then there is Traddles, a plump and cheerful rascal in his tight sky-blue suit that makes his arms and legs like rolypoly puddings, who con-

soles himself for being caned by drawing skeletons all over his slate; and Kit, the loyalest of loyal souls; and little Nickleby; and that other youngster who is constantly cropping up, the pretty boy, so small and not always very kindly treated, who is none other than Charles Dickens himself, the poet who has made his own childish sorrows and childish joys imperishable as none other before or since. He is never weary of telling us about this humiliated, forsaken, alarmed, and dreamy child, orphaned at a tender age; and when he pulls out the pathetic stop in this instance, he moves us readily to tears, for his sonorous voice is full-toned, and rich as a bell in its vibrations. These scenes of childhood's days which Dickens lavishes upon us in the pages of his novels can never be forgotten. They are woven of laughter and of tears, sublimity and ridiculousness, combining to form a rainbow which gladdens the skies. The exalted merges with the sentimental, tragedy with comedy, truth with fiction, till they form something new and strange. Here he rises superior to what is English and earthly; here Dickens knows no limitations to his greatness; here he is incomparable. Should ever an adequate monument be raised to his memory, around the bronze statue there should be grouped marble figures representing the children he has conceived, dancing and capering and weeping by the side of him who was a champion, a father, and a brother to them all. For he loved them as the purest incarnations of the human essence. Whenever he wanted his characters to make a special appeal to our hearts, he fashioned them simple as children. For the children's sakes he even loved those who were not childlike but childish, the feeble-minded and the mentally deranged. In many of his novels he introduces one of these pure fools, whose poor wits soar far above the

heads of ordinary cares and woes, to whom life offers no problems, or tasks, or troubles, to whom life seems nothing but a happy, wholly incomprehensible yet beautiful game. It is touching to follow the delicacy of his portrayal of such daft souls. He takes them by the hand as though they were invalids, and weaves a garland of goodness around their heads, crowning them as it were with an aureole. They are sacred to him, because they for ever inhabit the paradise of childhood.

And childhood, for Dickens, is paradise. Whenever I read one of Dickens's novels I am filled with forebodings of the day when his children shall grow up for I know that the sweetest thing will then pass away, irrevocably; soon his imaginative fervour will be chilled by the conventionalities of his day, pristine truth will be overlaid with English falsehood. What is more, he appears to share my feeling of dread. For he is reluctant to launch his darlings into life; and he never guides them onward into adulthood where they would become commonplace, jaded elders. He bids them farewell as soon as he has led them to the altar, to marriage; when all perils have been overcome, and they have entered the quiet haven of a comfortable existence. And the child he loved best of all, Little Nell, who was for him the reincarnation of a being prematurely wrenched from his side and whose loss he was never able completely to get over, Little Nell was not allowed to pass into the world of disappointment and lies. He kept her back in the paradise of childhood, early closed her sweet, blue eyes, allowed her all unawares to pass from the bright spring sunshine into the darkness of death, a seraphic smile upon her face. He loved her too dearly to abandon her to the world of reality.

For this world of reality, as I have already insisted, is a middle-class world, filled to satiety and desiring its ease and its comforts—is no more than a tiny, self-sufficient particle of the enormous possibilities life holds in store. A world so poverty-stricken as England then was (in the spiritual sense) could become rich only thanks to the advent of an overmastering emotion. Balzac made his bourgeois mighty by the power of hate; Dostoeffsky imparted strength to his world by a redeeming love. Dickens, too, great artist that he was, saved his people from the crushing burden of an earthly, all-too-earthly existence; he redeemed them by the sunshine of his humour. He contemplated this petty-bourgeois society of his with indulgence, but did not ascribe to it any objective importance, nor did he intone a hymn to all these worthy folk in praise of their sterling though humdrum qualities—a hymn of praise which, alas, so many of our German authors seem to think it their duty to sing. Dickens good-humouredly chaffed his compatriots for their foibles, making them, as Gottfried Keller and Wilhelm Raabe did for the German world of their day, just a trifle ludicrous, they and their Lilliputian cares and worries. But he made fun of them in a friendly and forbearing way, so that with all their faults and follies they remained eminently lovable.

This humour floods his work with sunshine, making his

modest landscapes resplendent and cheerful and unendingly attractive, full of wonder and delight. In this genial blaze, everything assumes an air of probability, even the false tears shine like diamonds, and the poor little passions glow as if they were genuine conflagrations. The quality of Dickens's humour lifts his work out of time, and places it in eternity. We are released from the tedium of the purely English atmosphere; and the essential hypocrisy of the British code is conquered by laughter. Like another Ariel, this sprightly humour hovers over all his books, filling them with homely melodies, drawing them into a merry dance, pervading them with an immense joy of life. It is never absent for long. Even in the underground darkness of trouble and disorder it shines steady and clear like a miner's lamp; it discharges the overwrought tensions; it mitigates the excessive sentimentality by a gentle undertone of satire and irony; softens exaggeration by its shadowed presence; it is the reconciler, the adjuster; it constitutes what is imperishable in Dickens's works.

As with Dickens's other qualities, this humour of his is typically English. There is nothing of the sensuous about it; it never forgets its manners; never gets drunk on its own high spirits; is never vicious or debauched. Even at the height of the amusement, the humour is not allowed to overleap the bounds of decorum, to spit venom or belch grossness as with Rabelais, to assume the sardonic vein and turn somersaults of wild enjoyment as with Cervantes, or to spring up into the realm of the impossible as with the Americans. Dickens's humour always observes the decencies, always keeps its head. Like most of his compatriots, Dickens laughs only with his mouth. His merriment does not rush upward in a roaring flame; it is, rather, radiant in

texture, suffusing warmth and light throughout every vein of the body; it brightens up into a thousand little tongues of fire, will-o'-the-wisps, teasing elves and imps, ravishing rogues amid the hard facts of everyday life.

It was inscribed on the tablets of Dickens's destiny that he should never pass beyond the limits of the halfway house, should never leave the middle road of safety. So his humour, too, conforms to the decrees of fate. It takes its place happily between the uproarious extreme of ribald and mocking laughter and the coldly cynical extreme of the satirist's superior smile. He had not his like among any of his great compatriots in the world of letters. Swift's caustic, disintegrating irony, Fielding's broad and merciless ridicule, were not in his vein; he did not turn the iron in people's wounds as did Thackeray. His laughter always does one good; it never hurts, is never splenetic, but plays around one like dappled sunshine. He neither wants to point a moral, nor to be sarcastic, nor, donning the fool's cap and bells, to hint at something solemn and earnest underlying his jokes and merriment. In fact, he desires nothing at all. He exists. He travels through life aimlessly and complacently, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, burlesquing the world as he goes, giving the people he encounters those diverting masks and queer lovable personalities we meet at every turn in his books, and thereby brightening the existence of millions here below. Everything that enters his circle of light seems to be lit up by his own radiance; even his rapscallions are redeemed by humour; the universe itself wants to laugh when Dickens glances at it merrily. Everything is asparkle and aglitter, and thus is eminently grateful to a people whose skies are so often shrouded and grey.

THE STYLIST, THE COMFORTER, AND THE CONSOLER

And his style! The words turn head over heels, the sentences twirl and whirl in and out of one another, leap aside, play hide-and-seek with the meaning, hurl questions at one another, tease, lead one another astray, caper and prance in an unending and sprightly galliard. And pervading it all, this unappeasable humour. Even without the salt of sexuality the dish is amazingly good in savour—and of course English prudery forbade the use of that condiment! Fever, and poverty, and vexation might do their worst with him, yet Dickens could not but write in merry mood. His humour is irresistible, it winks at us from his beautiful, alert eyes, and was only quenched at last when the flame of life was extinguished. No earthly might can prevail against it, nor will time dim its radiance. For I cannot imagine anyone whose heart is proof against that love-inspiring tale *The Cricket on the Hearth*, or who can withstand the gaiety of numberless episodes in Dickens's books. Spiritual needs and literary tastes may change; but so long as pleasant, cheerful thoughts are wanted, in moments when it is wise to take things easy for a while and to allow the waters of life to drift refreshingly about us, at times when the mind longs for nothing so much as to find relaxation in an innocent, melodious stirring of the emotions—then it is that one's hand will instinctively reach out for these books, not only in the British Isles, but the wide world over.

That is what gives the quality of greatness to Dickens's books, earth-bound though they be: they have sunshine within, and the rays strike outward, warming all who come into contact with them. Great works of art must not be judged by their intensity alone, nor by the human types that stand out against the background: they need, likewise, to be appraised by their extensity, and their effect upon the mass of mankind. Of Dickens we can say, and of him alone among literary geniuses of the nineteenth century, that he increased the joyousness of the world. How many millions of eyes have wept over his books? How many hearts whence laughter had faded or been blotted out have seen the seed blossoming anew under the fertilizing sun of his mirth! His influence extended far beyond the realm of literature. The wealthy, rueful and ashamed, left money for charitable foundations after reading about the Brothers Cheeryble; the sour-minded and crabbed became kindlier in disposition; we may vouch for it that children running wild in the streets were oftener the recipients of coppers after *Oliver Twist* began to appear; government took upon itself to improve workhouse conditions, and to have private schools inspected from time to time, to put an end to gross abuses. Pity and charity have grown more abundantly in England because Dickens lived and wrote; and that the harsh fate of countless poor and unhappy wretches has been mitigated is largely due to him.

I can hear some protesting: "But such considerations are absolutely beside the point, when the æsthetic value of a work of art is up for judgment." Granted! Nevertheless they, too, have their importance, for they show that a great work of art not only has pinions wherewith to fly beyond this temporal world into the universe of the imagination

there to give free rein to the soaring flight of the creative will, but also can bring about profound changes in the world of reality as well. And such changes in the visible, the actual, are the reflexion of a change in the emotional atmosphere. Unlike the men of letters who are self-seeking, who ask for sympathy and consolation, Dickens was a bountiful giver. Dickens poured out compassion and cheerfulness upon his contemporaries, thereby enhancing their serenity of mind and their pleasure, and stimulating the blood to course more swiftly through their veins. The world is the brighter for his passage; there is more jollity abroad since the day when the youthful stenographer gave up recording other people's words in the Houses of Parliament and determined to strike out for himself and to describe men and their destinies. Thus was he enabled to cherish joy and keep happiness alive; and thus was he enabled to bequeath to later generations the record of an England that could once more be "Merrie England" in the days between the nightmare of the Napoleonic wars and the disturbing visions of modern imperialism. The years will come and go, but still mankind will look back at the world Dickens depicted, a world growing old-fashioned and out-of-date even as he wrote, a world still full of strange trades now for ever passed away into the mists of time and ground to powder in the mills of industrialism; and this world will continue to be fresh and living, innocent, and filled with a simple, quiet serenity.

Dickens's imagination created the idyll of England: that is his finest achievement. This peacefulness and content must not be depreciated by a comparison with mightier deeds in the world of letters: for idylls, too, are immortal, and from immemorial days have come and gone among us.

"Georgics" or "Bucolics," poems written by men who have fled from the horrors of desire in order to find rest, are perpetually recurring; and as the generations are born anew and are replaced by yet other generations, these idylls will arise again, undying and ever young. They come in the pause between excitements, when mankind is gathering up its forces for another plunge; they give a breathing-space of quiet satisfaction to the overworked heart. Some writers are called upon to create strength; others, to create stillness and quietude. Charles Dickens came to bring a few moments' idyllic peace to the world. Today, life is full of noise; the roar of machines perpetually deafens our ears; time flies on rapid wings. But the idyll will never die, because it is of the very essence of the joy in life; it returns as the birds return in the springtime, it comforts us like the blue sky after storm; cheerfulness ever recurs after the most painful crises and convulsions of the soul. Thus, too, will Dickens come again and again into his own, no matter how long he may have suffered eclipse and been forgotten; he will always be a present refuge in time of trouble, when the human heart craves for joyfulness, and when, shattered by the strain of the passions' tragedies, it turns to the quiet things of life in order to catch the strains of the poet's minstrelsy.

DOSTOEFFSKY

(1821–1880)

In your lack of power to finish anything, lies the secret of your greatness.

GOETHE

THE EXPLORATION OF A NEW COSMOS

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies . . .

KEATS

It is a difficult task, one full of responsibility, to write worthily of Fedor Mihailovich Dostoeffsky, and to set forth adequately all he signifies for the inner life of the contemporary world. Indeed, the breadth and the power of this one individual demand from us a new standard of measurement.

Approaching him as we should approach another, we expect to find a circumscribed imaginative work, the creation of a man subject to the ordinary limitations; instead, we are confronted with boundless expanses, with a cosmos having its own circling stars and making its own music of the spheres. Discouragement overwhelms the voyager into these realms: his first experience of their magic is too alien, the range of their ideas is too vast, their message is too exotic, to permit him to gaze undazzled into their heavens and feast his eyes as he does on more familiar skies. To be fully appreciated, Dostoeffsky must be lived from within. We must probe our own powers of sympathy and compassion to the depths, we must attune our hearts to a fresh and enhanced sensibility, we must delve down to the roots of our being, if we would discover the correlations between our own nature and human nature as envisaged by Dostoeff-

sky—for at first we think his conception fantastical, to learn in the end that it is amazingly true to life. We can only hope to make ourselves bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh if we have the courage to fathom to the lowest abysses of our personality, to penetrate to what is eternal and unchangeable in our essence, to search out the ultimate fibrils of our innermost self.

How strange this Russian countryside seems at the first approach; a careless glance, and the steppe of Dostoeffsky's homeland would appear a pathless waste, remote and having little kinship with the familiar scenes of the west. No friendly contours are there to caress the eye; rarely does a suave hour invite the traveller to repose. A twilight scarred with lightning-flashes and fraught with mystery encompassing the senses alternates with an extreme of frost and ice which clarifies the mind; no warm, bright sunshine to fill sky and earth with gladness, but the northern lights flaming blood-red athwart the heavens. We are confronted with a primeval landscape, a magic world of Dostoeffsky's own creation; pregnant with manifold experience, and yet at the same time virginal. A tremor seizes us, a tremor not wholly unpleasant, as if we were approaching the everlasting elements. Before long our mood prompts us to linger, giving our admiration rein; and yet a boding knowledge informs us that here is no region wherein we may make ourselves at home for ever; soon we have to return to our own warmer and friendlier, though maybe narrower, world. Shame assails us as we realize that this iron landscape is too great for everyday contemplation; the alternations from an icy to an ardent atmosphere and back again make it hard to draw breath. The spirit might well quail before the majesty of so much horror,

were it not that, above the tragic welter, an unending expanse of goodness is spread, starry and serene; the selfsame skies enclosing the world we know, but higher, more spacious, more intellectually sharp and glacial, than those which form the canopy over our gentler zones. Only when reassured by an upward glance from earth to the skies above, can we attain infinite consolation for the infinite passion of the human lot, perceiving greatness ambushed in the horror, divinity hidden in the gloom.

Such a glance into the empyrean is alone capable of transforming into an ardent love the awe which inspires us when contemplating Dostoeffsky's work; only by a searching penetration into his unique qualities can we gain a clear understanding of the profound sense of brotherhood and the all-embracing humanity which permeate the life and writings of this mighty Russian. But how labyrinthine are the ways into his heart! Vast is the expanse, dread are the horizons, that open up before our vision; and as we pass from the limitless immensity into the unfathomed depths, the work of the master becomes more and more enigmatic. It is, indeed, saturated with mystery. Each character beckons us down into the daimonic abysses of the terrestrial, or swings us heavenward to God's very throne. Behind each division of his work, each face of his creations, each fold of his disguise, there broods eternal night or shines eternal day: for life and destiny have decreed that Dostoeffsky shall be kin to all the mysteries of existence. His universe hangs betwixt death and madness, dreams and sharp-cut reality. His personal problem is incessantly colliding with the insoluble problem of all mankind; every shining surface reflects immortality. As a man, as an imaginative writer, as a Russian, as a political propagandist, as a prophet, no

matter the aspect under which we consider him, his whole personality irradiates eternal purpose. No road leads to the goal of his being, no question ever allows us to penetrate to the ultimate recesses of his heart. Enthusiasm alone is permitted to approach him; and even enthusiasm must be modest and unassuming, must appear less ardent than our author's own loving reverence before the mystery of mankind.

Dostoeffsky never holds out a hand to help us approach him. Other master builders of our day have revealed their intentions. Wagner gave us, in addition to his work, a prefatory explanation and a polemical defence; Tolstoy flung the doors of everyday life wide, he accosted those who came to inquire and encouraged the curious. But Dostoeffsky only allows us to examine his finished work; the outline sketches which might have enlightened us as to his motives have been consumed in the fires of creation. Silent and shy, he passed on his way through life, and we are hardly given a glimpse even at the outward and physical facts of his existence. It was only during his youth that he could boast of having friends: as a grown man he was a solitary, for he considered he would detract from his love of humanity as a whole if he were to show marked affection for any one individual. His very letters (save perhaps those to Anna Grigorevna), when they voice complaints and utter cries of distress, betray no more than the general stringency of his life, disclose no more than the dumb pangs of a tortured body. As far as an individual appeal is concerned, his lips are closed. Whole years of his childhood are submerged in the shadows. Though there are many living today who have beheld him in the flesh, yet as a man he has already become intangible and aloof; a legend

is growing up around his name, he has acquired the lineaments of a hero and a saint. The twilight of mingled fact and fancy which obscures as much as it illuminates the mortal integument of Homer or Dante or Shakespeare, does the same service to that of Dostoeffsky, giving unearthly lustre to his traits. We cannot hope to write of his destiny if we rely on information gleaned from concrete documents: love alone, love informed with knowledge, must be our guide.

Unaided and undirected must we betake ourselves into the labyrinth of this soul; our only clue, a loving heart freed from the thraldom of earthly passion: The farther we venture on our way, the more aware do we become of our own selves; and it is only when we have attained to a realization of our common kinship with universal humanity, that we really draw near the master. One who knows himself well, knows Dostoeffsky well; for if any man has succeeded in realizing the quintessence of all things human, it is surely he. The road to an understanding of his work leads through the purgatory of the passions, through the hell of tribulation, through every realm of human torment: torment of man and of mankind; torment of the artist; and the ultimate, most agonizing torment of all, the torment of one who is tormented by God himself. The way is dark: if we are not to lose the trail we must light it from the fires within, fanning them to a blaze by our passionate desire for truth. We must first explore the intricacies of our own personality, before hazarding ourselves into his. He sends no herald to lead us forward. Nor has he any means of testifying his presence, save the artist's mystical trinity of flesh and spirit: his countenance, his destiny, and his work.

LIKENESS

Dostoeffsky's face is the face of a peasant. An ashen hue pervades the hollow cheeks, making them appear almost grimy, emphasizing the furrows caused by many years of suffering; the skin, dry and parched, is stretched tight over the bony framework, and is bereft of blood and colour, sucked clean of life by the vampire which has preyed on it for a score of years. To right and left, two huge boulders jut forth, the prominent cheek-bones typical of his race; a sparse moustache and a straggling beard veil the sad-looking mouth and delicate chin. Earth, rock, and forest; a tragical and primitive landscape; such are the basic lineaments of Dostoeffsky's countenance. All is dark and pre-eminently earthly in this unbeautiful face. I have called it a peasant's, but I might almost term it a beggar's, so flat and colourless is it, so lacking in brightness: a piece of the Russian steppe cast high and dry upon the stones. Even the deep-set eyes, gleaming from within their sockets, are incapable of imparting a spark of light to the grim visage, for their radiance is directed inward. As soon as the lids close over them, the face becomes a death-mask, and the nervous tension which otherwise grips the frail features is relaxed into a lifeless lethargy.

The first feeling we are aware of as we look is repulsion. This initial sensation is gradually replaced by one of growing fascination and admiration; for, crowning the narrow, peasant face, there rises the dome of the forehead,

gleaming white above the dark shadows; sculptured marble dominating the clay of the fleshly tenement and the scraggy wilderness of beard. All the shafts of light stream upwards in this face; our gaze becomes absorbed in the broad and kingly brow to the exclusion of the rest; and as the years pass by, and age and illness work havoc among the features, the brow acquires a growing lustre and irradiates light far and wide. It stands like the heavens, high and unassailable, above the body wasted by illness, a glorious symbol of the triumph of the spirit over earthly misery. Nowhere does this triumph find better expression than in the mask which was taken when Dostoeffsky lay dead, his lids loosely blotting out the agonized eyes, his pale fingers gripping the poor little wooden cross which a compassionate peasant woman had given him in the days of his penal servitude. In this cast, the forehead shines forth over the soulless countenance like the rising sun over a benighted landscape, revealing to us the selfsame message that is enshrined in Dostoeffsky's works: spirit and faith have delivered him from the trammels of life on earth. His greatness seems to increase as we penetrate deeper into his being; and never is his face more expressive than it is in death.

TRAGEDY OF HIS LIFE

Non vi si pensa quanto sangue costa.
DANTE

As I have already said, the first feeling we are aware of as we approach Dostoeffsky is one of repulsion: but this is followed by a realization of his greatness. His fate, too, at first sight appears both terrible and commonplace; it seems to corroborate the message of his face, to be peasantlike and ordinary. At the outset we cannot but deem his life one long and senseless martyrdom. Poverty robbed him of the sweetness of youth and the peaceful security of old age; pain bored into his vitals and privation wasted his frame; his limbs twitched under the impact of his glowing nerves; his passions were ceaselessly fanned by gusts of desire. No torment is spared him; he escapes no martyrdom. The Erinyes seem to hunt him with remorseless enmity. Yet when we look back upon his life we realize that fate was harsh because something perdurable had to be hammered out of this mortal, that fate made use of violence because it had to overpower a force as mighty as itself. Dostoeffsky did not tread the smooth highway along which other great writers of the nineteenth century were allowed to travel; he was the sport of destiny, the antagonist of a god whose caprice it was to measure forces with the strongest. We must go back to the annals of the Old Testament, to the days of the heroes, before we can find anything comparable to Dostoeffsky's lot. There is nothing modern about it, nor

is there any trace of middle-class comforts and amenities in the story of his pilgrimage. He has, like Jacob, to wrestle with the angel of the Lord; he has, like Job, to rebel against God even while abasing himself before the Eternal. He is never allowed to be sure of himself, never granted a leisure hour, for he must always be aware of the presence of the Almighty who chastens him in sign of loving kindness. Not for a moment may he rest in peace and happiness, for the road upon which he travels leads away into the world without end. It would seem, at times, as if the genii that governed his life had relented, and were about to permit the victim of their wrath to amble quietly along the common highway; but ere he sets foot upon it and can rub shoulders with his fellow-mortals, the hand of the avenger is upon him, thrusting him back into the burning bush. He is raised aloft, only that he may fall the deeper into the pit: thus shall he learn the extremes of ecstasy and of despair. He is caught up to the highest altitudes of hope where weaker vessels perish in voluptuousness, and cast down into the abyss of passion where others are shattered by suffering. Like Job, once more, he is constantly being crushed at the very moment when he feels most secure; he is bereft of wife and children; he is afflicted with illness, despised and scorned, that he may ceaselessly justify his actions before God, and, by perpetual rebellion and unquenchable hope, bear fresh witness to his undying devotion. It would seem as if, in this lukewarm age, one man had been singled out to testify to the world that titanic possibilities of pleasure and pain are still open to us; this one man was Dostoeffsky, through whose being the mighty Will streamed like a torrent. His poor, sick body might writhe convulsively, his sufferings might be poignantly voiced in a letter now and

again; but the momentary revolt was instantly quelled by the spirit and by faith. The mystic in Dostoeffsky, the sage in him, recognized the hand that was afflicting him, and he realized the tragical and terrible meaning of his fate. Through his passion, love was turned to pain: he has tinged his epoch and his universe with the witting ardour of his torment.

Thrice does life swing him aloft, only to toss him down again. He is still quite a young man when fame beckons: his very first book makes his name widely known; but almost at once he sinks back into oblivion, undergoing imprisonment, and penal servitude (katorga) in Siberia. Emerging once more from obscurity, he takes Russia by storm with the publication of *The House of the Dead*. The tsar sheds tears over the book; Young Russia rallies round him. Dostoeffsky founds a periodical, and his words reach the whole Russian people: some of his great novels appear. Whereupon his material existence suffers shipwreck, he is scourged with debts and worries, and hunted forth from his native land; illness bites into his flesh; he becomes a nomad, wandering through Europe, forgotten of his own people. Then, after years of labour and privation, he rises once more to the surface of the grey waters of poverty and neglect: his speech at the Pushkin festival proves him a supreme master of his craft, and the prophet of his homeland. Henceforward the star of his fame is to set no more. But now another hand is raised to crush him; death deals him the final blow, and it is only round his coffin that the waves of popular enthusiasm surge. Fate has nothing more to ask of him; the cruel though omniscient Will has got all it wants out of him, has extracted the most precious of in-

tellectual fruits: contemptuously, the empty husk of the body is flung on to the dust-heap.

Such wanton cruelty it was which made Dostoeffsky's life at once a work of art and a tragedy. His achievement as an artist is symbolical of his whole existence, in that it assumes the typical form assumed by his own destiny. We find therein strange coincidences and identities and mysterious reflexions which elude demonstration or explanation. Even his birth was symbolical, for Fedor Mihailovich Dostoeffsky was born in the lodge of a workhouse infirmary. In the first hour, his place in the world is indicated to him: he is to be apart, among the rejected, with the dregs of life; he is to be closely acquainted with suffering, sorrow, and death. Not even at the last (for he died in one of the poorer quarters of Petersburg, in a mean street, and in a little fourth-story room) is he to escape the sordid; during the fifty-nine years of his sojourn on earth he remains on terms of intimacy with misery, poverty, illness, and privation; he never quits the workhouse of life.

The strictness of his upbringing encouraged his inborn tendency to brooding. His first years were spent in the atmosphere of the Moscow workhouse infirmary, where he shared a tiny room with his brother. It seems absurd to speak of "childhood" in his connexion, for everything that is relevant to childhood was excluded in little Fedor's case. Dostoeffsky himself never mentions this period, for his pride made him unwilling to seek sympathy. A grey blank occupies that portion of his biography where luckier poets' eyes are filled wth laughing and many-hued visions, with tender memories and sweet regret. Yet we may learn much of the early years by looking into the burning eyes of the

children he created in his works. He must have resembled Kolya in *The Brothers Karamazoff*, the lad whose fanciful imaginings bordered on hallucination, who was filled with a fluctuating desire to become great, and who was swayed by a precocious, yet powerful yearning to outgrow himself and "to suffer for the whole of mankind." His heart must have been like a chalice brimful and running over with love, but burdened with a hysterical anxiety lest he betray himself, like little Netyoshka. Again, may we not catch a glimpse of Dostoeffsky's own features in his portrait of Ilyuchka, the son of a drunken captain, who suffered so much shame on account of his poverty-stricken home life, and nevertheless was ever on the alert in defence of his kin?

By the time he stepped forth from this dreary world, his childhood was over and done with. He took refuge in the world of books, that everlasting sanctuary for all those who are dissatisfied and slighted. It is a variegated world, full of perils. He and his brother spent many a night and many a day in reading the same books. Already at that time he was insatiable where his inclinations were concerned, so that even the most innocent impulse was intensified to a vice. Though he is filled with enthusiasm for humanity at large, yet he is morbidly shy and reserved, simultaneously fire and ice, obsessed by a craving for solitude. He gropes aimlessly amid the passions, explores every by-way of the cellarage wherein his spirit dwells during these youthful years, always alone and filled with disgust in the midst of pleasure, always oppressed by a sense of guilt while tasting of happiness, always with grimly set lips. He spends a few dull years in the School of Engineers; they are dull because he makes no friends—and because he is kept on

short allowance among those who have money to burn. Like the heroes in his books, he lives the life of a hermit, passing his days adreaming, deep in meditation, his only company the secret burden of thought and of speculation. At present he sees no way opening up as an outlet to his ambition; he is on the watch over himself and sits in his lair incubating his powers. With mingled voluptuousness and horror, he feels that they are germinating, deep down; he loves them, and at the same time he fears them; he is afraid even to move lest he should mar these obscure and delicate processes. For several years he remains in this larval state of solitude and silence; he becomes hypochondriacal, is seized with a mystical longing for death, is often overwhelmed with terror of the outer world and of himself, and shudders as he contemplates the chaos in his own breast. In order to provide for his immediate wants, he spends the nights translating Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* and Schiller's *Don Carlos;* characteristically enough, the money thus earned is soon spent in the satisfaction of contradictory inclinations: almsgiving and excesses. From the murky squalor of these days something slowly emerges and takes definite shape; at last, out of the visionary and crowded state of alternating anxiety and ecstasy, there is born the first fruit of his imagination, the novel, *Poor Folk.*

It was in 1844, when the author was twenty-four years of age, that this masterly study was written, a study of human nature by the most lonesome of men, composed "with passionate ardour, nay, almost with tears." His poverty, the fountain-head of his humiliation, was responsible for its genesis; his greatest asset, love of suffering, an endless capacity for suffering with others, gave the work its blessing. Dostoeffsky contemplated the pages uneasily. He

suspected they contained a question asked of fate, the answer to which might mean something decisive to his career. It was only after mature reflection that he made up his mind to submit the manuscript to Nekrasoff.

Two days go by without a sign. Brooding and alone, Dostoeffsky sits at home working on into the night until the lamp burns low. At four in the morning, comes an urgent ringing at the door. He goes to open. Nekrasoff is there, flings his arms round the young author's neck, is loud in his jubilations. He and a friend have read the manuscript together, all night they have been at it, laughing and weeping. At last they can resist the impulse no longer, they feel they must come and hug him.

That door-bell ringing in the night is the first vital experience in Dostoeffsky's life; it summons him to fame. The friends continue to rejoice together until the morning is well advanced. Then Nekrasoff hurries off to find Belinsky, the most eminent Russian critic of the day. Hardly has the door opened, when he starts crying aloud: "A new Gogol has arisen!" He waves the manuscript aloft while Belinsky grumbles non-committally, put out by so much enthusiasm: "Gogols are as thick as blackberries if one is to believe all you say." Next day, however, when Dostoeffsky comes to see him, Belinsky's mood has completely changed. "Do you yourself realize what you have done?" Such are the words with which he accosts the amazed young man. Dostoeffsky thrills as he realizes that this may mean fame—a new sensation for him. He goes down the stairs in a dream; arrived at the corner of the street, he stands in confusion. For the first time he feels (and yet hardly dares to trust his own feelings) that all these dark and terrible forces that urge him onward must be something mighty, perhaps,

even, the "greatness" of which he dreamed as a child, the "immortality," the much-desired privilege of "suffering for the whole of mankind." Exaltation and contrition, pride and humility, contend together in his heart. He knows not to which voice he should listen. He goes on his way, stumbling forward like a drunken man; tears stream unheeded down his face, tears of joy and of sorrow.

Such was the melodramatic way in which Dostoeffsky established his position as a writer. Even in this instance, we find that the course taken by his life was closely followed by that taken by his creative work. There is something of the sensational novel, something childlike and primitive, in both; it is only by their inner greatness and truth that they are caught up into the realm of the magnificent. In Dostoeffsky's career, an incident may begin as melodrama, but it invariably ends in tragedy. His life is founded upon tension: decisions are compressed into a single second of time, without transition; ten or twenty such seconds of ecstasy or of collapse suffice to determine the course of his destiny. One might go so far as to call these moments of ecstasy or of impotent collapse "epileptic fits of life." At the back of each minute of ecstasy there stands, threateningly, the grey twilight of waning sensation, and from the clouds flash lightnings. He has to pay for every flight by a subsequent fall; each second of grace has to be followed by numberless minutes of toil and of despair. Fame, the glowing halo which Belinsky in that morning hour had pressed upon Dostoeffsky's head, became simultaneously the first link in the chain of arduous labours which he had to drag behind him all his life. *White Nights* was the last book he wrote as a free man and in the sheer joy of creation. Thenceforward, writing was for him a means of livelihood, a means

of liquidating his debts and of repaying loans. Every line was pledged before it was written, the child sold before it was born. He was chained in the galleys of literature, his despairing cries for freedom echoed down all the days of his life: death alone could break the fetters that bound him. How little did he guess, when enjoying his initial success, the torment that awaited him! A couple of short stories were quickly finished, and he immediately set about planning a new novel.

But fate, ever on the watch, lifts a warning finger. Life must not become too easy. Dostoeffsky must plumb it to the depths; and, that he may do so, God, who loves him, puts him to the test.

Again, as once before, the door-bell rings in the night. This time no friendly voice accosts him to announce joyful tidings and coming fame. Instead, he hears the message of doom. Officers and Cossacks press forward into the room; the occupant is arrested; seals are placed upon his papers. During four months he languishes in the Peter-Paul Fortress, without knowing the crime for which he is being made to suffer. He is indicted for having taken part in the discussions of a rather excitable group of friends, discussions which later became known by the grossly exaggerated name of "the Petrasheffsky conspiracy." Dostoeffsky's arrest was undoubtedly due to a misunderstanding. Nevertheless, the sentence pronounced upon him was the most rigorous known to the law: he was to be shot.

The whole of his destiny is once more compressed into a second of time, the most restricted and yet the richest moment of his existence; an unending second, wherein the lips of death and of life meet in a burning kiss. At dawn, he and his nineteen comrades are escorted from the prison,

are made to strip to their shirts, are tied to posts, and have their eyes bandaged. Dostoeffsky listens as his death sentence is read aloud; the drums are sounded. His entire future is pressed as it were into a handful of suspense; boundless despair and a boundless desire for life are condensed into a molecule of time. Then, an officer raises his hand, waves a white cloth, reads the tsar's pardon, and announces that the sentence of death has been commuted to one of penal servitude in Siberia.

He now plunges down into an abyss where oblivion is his portion after his brief gleam of youthful celebrity. During four years his horizon is to be confined by fifteen hundred oaken pales. In sorrow and privation, he ticks off the four times three hundred and sixty-five days of his captivity. His companions are criminals, thieves, and murderers for the most part; his occupations, alabaster grinding, brick carrying, snow shovelling; his one permitted book, the Bible; his pets, a mangy cur and a broken-winged eagle. Four years he dwells in the "house of the dead," in the underworld, a shade amid the shades, nameless and forgotten. By the time the chains have been knocked off the weary ankles and the paling has been left behind, he has become another man: his health is undermined, his fame has vanished into thin air, his whole existence has been shattered. His desire for life alone remains to him, unchanged and intact; brighter than ever, the ardent fire of ecstasy flames up from the wax of his plastic body. A few more years must be spent in Siberia before he may return to Russia; throughout this period he is only half free and is not allowed to publish a line. During his exile, crushed by the bitterest despair and solitude, he enters into that strange marriage of his, with an ailing woman of most pe-

culiar character, who grudgingly reciprocates his compassionate love. The dark tragedy which underlay his sacrifice is doomed to be for ever hidden from our ken, though in *Insulted and Injured* we are permitted a glimpse of the quiet heroism that inspired him.

He returns to Petersburg an unknown man. His literary sponsors have left him in the lurch, his friends have dispersed. But by courage and energy he fights his way out of the waves which threaten to submerge him, and wins to safety. His *House of the Dead*, this unique record of life among criminals, rouses Russia from the lethargy of lukewarm sympathy. The nation realizes with horror that immediately beneath the superficial layers of the quiet world in which it lives, there is another world, a purgatory wherein is to be found every conceivable misery. The voice of the accuser penetrates within the walls of the Kremlin itself; the tsar sobs over the book; a thousand lips pronounce Dostoeffsky's name. One year suffices to recapture his fame, which is now greater than ever, and far more secure. Together with his brother, he founds a journal, for which he writes almost all the articles; the poet becomes the preacher, the political propagandist, the "praeceptor Borussiae." Success is instantaneous; the periodical has a wide circulation. He puts the finishing touches to a novel; happiness beckons once more. Dostoeffsky's career seems now to be on a solid foundation.

But again the sombre Will that brooded over this man's life intervened, saying: "Not yet!" Two earthly torments had hitherto been spared him: the martyrdom of being an exile under foreign skies, and the daily worry about how to provide even the barest necessaries of life. Siberia and the katorga, those ugliest grimaces on the face of Russia,

were still "home"; now he was to experience the yearning of the nomad for the shelter of his tribal tent. Once more he must plunge beneath the waters of oblivion, ere he can become the herald of his nation. Lightnings from on high strike down the work of his creation: his periodical is suppressed. The prohibition is again the outcome of a misunderstanding, but its effects are just as dire as those of the previous interference with Dostoeffsky's activities. Blow upon blow follows: his wife dies; then his brother; then his dearest friend and helper. The debts of two families are heaped upon his shoulders, and cripple him. He labours feverishly by day and by night in a vain endeavour to meet the demands of his creditors; he writes and edits his works and even sets them up in print himself, in order to save money and to rescue his honour and his existence. Fate is stronger than he, and he cannot cope with his liabilities. He flees like a guilty man, flees under cover of night, away into foreign lands.

Thus began his wanderings through Europe as an exile, those long and dreary days of severance from that Russian soil which meant so much to him, a severance which seemed to crib his spirit between narrower walls than did the stockade of his katorga days. It is terrible to think what this great Russian writer, this sublimest genius of his generation, this herald of the infinite, must have suffered as he flitted aimless and penniless from country to country.

Poverty-stricken, he has difficulty in finding shelter under even the humblest of roofs; epilepsy racks his nerves; debts and duties egg him on from toil to toil; perplexity and shame drive him from one town to another. If a ray of happiness shines into his life, it is immediately obscured by gathering clouds. A young lass, Anna Grigorevna, his

shorthand writer, becomes his second wife; but the first child that is born to them is snatched from them after a few months, the victim of its mother's debility and the penury which dogged the steps of its exiled parents. Siberia was no more than purgatory, the anteroom of Dostoeffsky's sufferings; France, Germany, and Italy were his hell. It seems impertinent to try and picture the actuality of so tragical an existence. If ever, happening to be in Dresden, I find myself strolling down a street of sordid, ill-conditioned houses, I ponder whether it may not have been one of these that sheltered Dostoeffsky, an inconspicuous abode squeezed in among those of Saxon tradespeople. I picture him alone in some fourth-story room, alone, everlastingly alone encircled by foreigners.

No one knew him during these years of exile. A few miles away, in Naumberg, Nietzsche was living, the one man who might have understood him; Richard Wagner, Hebbel, Flaubert, Gottfried Keller, his contemporaries, are within hail, but he knows no more about them than they about him. Like a dangerous animal, unkempt, in threadbare garments, he lurches forth from his workroom and his steps lead him to the same haunts no matter whether he be living in Dresden, in Geneva, or in Paris: he invariably finds his way to some café or club where he can read the Russian newspapers. He must feel Russia's presence, for Russia is home; he takes pleasure in the mere sight of the Cyrillic letters, and the associations called up by the familiar words.

Sometimes, not out of any special love for art (in these matters he remains true to type, the Byzantine barbarian, the iconoclast), but simply in order to warm himself during the cold weather, he goes to a picture gallery. He knows

nothing of the people around him but he hates them because they are not Russians; he hates the Germans in Germany, and the French in France. His heart is in Russia, though his body is elsewhere. Not a word does he exchange with any of his German, or French, or Italian colleagues.

The only place where he is a familiar figure is at the bank, where for days on end his pale face is seen, while, his voice trembling with anxiety, he inquires whether at last a credit has not come from Russia, the pittance of a hundred roubles he has had to abase himself to beg from the hands of strangers. The clerks do not even try to check their smiles as the poor fool appears, always hopeful and expectant. At the pawnbroker's, too, he is well known, for he has pledged everything he possesses; once he even pawned his trousers in order to have the wherewithal to dispatch a telegram to Petersburg, a message so poignant that it sends a shudder down one's back, and whose tones are so frequently re-echoed in his letters. One's heart is wrung as one reads the fawning phrases used by this great man in his humiliating need, the letters in which he reiterates his demands for money, calling upon the name of Christ over and over again; these terrible letters in which he begs for a paltry handful of roubles. All night he sits at his writing-table; and, while his wife is groaning in labour in the adjoining room, while epilepsy prepares for the assault, while the landlady, backed by the police, threatens proceedings if she is not paid her rent, and the midwife clamours for her fee, he composes *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, *The Possessed*, and *The Gambler*, those monumental works of the nineteenth century wherein are portrayed the universal types of our spiritual world.

Work is his salvation, but also his torment. While at his

writing he lives in Russia, his native land. He languishes in Europe as in the katorga, and for that reason he immerses himself ever deeper in his works. They act as an elixir, inebriating him; they are a game which makes his every nerve tense. Meanwhile, he greedily counts the days till he may go home, as of yore he counted the dates in his prison-house; a beggar if needs must, but home, home at last. Russia, Russia, Russia; such is his reiterated cry in his sore distress. But he cannot go back yet; he must still remain nameless for his work's sake; must still wander forlorn along the streets of foreign towns; must still continue to suffer patiently, uncomplainingly. He must dwell among the husks of life, ere he can rise transcendent to the topmost pinnacle of enduring fame. His body is exhausted by privations, illness is making inroads upon his brain so that for days together he lies half comatose. Yet no sooner is the attack over than he betakes himself to his work-table again. He is now fifty years of age: but he has experienced the torture of an æon.

Then, at last, when he is wellnigh spent, fate speaks once more: "It is enough!" God turns his face to Job. At the age of fifty-two Dostoeffsky is able to return to his homeland. His books have fought his battles for him; Turgeneff, Tolstoy, are thrown into the shade; Russia has eyes for none but him. *An Author's Daybook* makes of him the herald of his people. With his last remaining strength and with consummate art, he completes the work which is to be his testament to the future of the nation, *The Brothers Karamazoff*. Now he is vouchsafed a glance at the meaning of his destiny, and he is granted a moment of superlative happiness: for it is made known to him that the seed of his life has sprouted to become a thing eternal. Just as, in

the past, his sufferings have been compressed into seconds of intensity, so at this period is his triumph condensed into a fraction of time: his God flashes lightnings upon him, but not in order to destroy him; on the contrary, he is, like a prophet, wafted aloft on a chariot of fire into eternity. The great writers of Russia are invited to commemorate the centenary of Pushkin's birth; each is expected to make a speech. Turgeneff, the "westerner," the author who all along has usurped Dostoeffsky's place in the house of fame, takes precedence, and makes a speech received by the audience with mild attention and civil tolerance. Next day, Dostoeffsky is to give his contribution; he seizes his opportunity in a spirit of daimonic exaltation, and flings his thunderbolts among the assembly. He begins in a soft and rather husky voice; but suddenly, like a storm, his words flame up in ecstatic ardour; he proclaims the sacred mission of Russia as the universal reconciler of national and spiritual oppositions. His hearers, like sickled wheat, fall prostrate at his feet. The rafters ring with the explosion of joy from a thousand hearts; women kiss his hands; a student collapses in a fainting fit; the other speakers forgo their privilege and do not pronounce their orations. Enthusiasm knows no limit; glory burns like a halo around the head of him who has hitherto worn a crown of thorns.

This triumph was granted him by destiny: one glowing moment was to manifest the fulfilment of his mission and the victory won by his work. Then, the sound fruit having successfully been extracted, fate flung the empty husk of his body aside. On February 10, 1881, Dostoeffsky died. A shudder passed through the nation: this was followed by a moment of speechless grief. Then, from every town, no matter how distant it might be, came a flow of deputations.

This was no organized demonstration, but the spontaneous outburst of a people wishing to pay Dostoeffsky the last honours. In every nook and corner of the great city, hearts glowed with love for the mighty dead. Too late! Too late now to show their love for him who, while life lasted, they had forgotten. His body lay in state in his study, and the street was black with people who came to pay their mournful respects. The crowd of Dostoeffsky's admirers surrounded the modest dwelling, begging for a blossom or a leaf from the wealth of wreaths and bouquets that filled the room to overflowing. Hardly a flower was left as the day wore to a close. The heat in the death-chamber was so intense that the candles went out for lack of air. Still the people came, wave upon wave breaking against the table whereon the body lay. So tremendous was the onslaught, that the coffin was displaced, and might have fallen had not the widow and the two terrified children been there to save it from crashing to the ground.

The chief of police was at first loath to sanction a public funeral, for the students wished to carry the Siberian convict's chains in the rear of the hearse, and many dreaded the outcome of such pageantry. Nevertheless, the authorities did not venture to use force, and decided it was wiser to respect the popular feeling than to stifle it. During the memorable procession, Dostoeffsky's dream became, for one hour at least, a reality: Russia was unified. Just as in his works the classes and the masses were associated by a sense of confraternity, so now there was an unforeseen and unexpected fusion of the hundreds of thousands who followed him to the grave. Fired by a national idea, all parties, all adversaries, were reconciled and united by their common grief. Young scions of the blood royal, priests,

workers, students, officers, lackeys, and beggars, marching forward under a forest of flags, joined voices to mourn the departed. The church where the mass for the dead was to be celebrated was encumbered with flowers, and at the grave-side all parties swore a solemn pact of love and reverence. Thus, in this last hour, he bestowed the gift of reconciliation upon his people, and, with elemental strength, he was able to hold together in momentary solidarity the mad contradictions of his epoch.

A stupendous salute is fired as he descends into the tomb, a terrible mine explodes: the revolution! For, three weeks after the funeral, the tsar is assassinated; the land is filled with the thunders of revolt, and the lightnings of chastisement flash athwart the skies. Dostoeffsky, like Beethoven, passes away while the elements are in an uproar: he dies amid the clamour of a storm.

THE MEANING OF HIS DESTINY

Lo, I became a master
To suffer and rejoice;
And in the lust to suffer
True ecstasy found voice.
GOTTFRIED KELLER

Dostoeffsky's struggle against his fate knew no end; it took the form of a kind of loving antagonism. Every conflict led to a painful crisis, every contrast stretched his spirit to breaking-point. Life hurts him because it loves him; and he loves life because it takes so firm a grip of him; for this sage knows that suffering is the finest school for the emotions, and that it holds the greatest possibilities for the development of the sentiments. Fate never relinquishes its pressure upon him; always he is being constrained to renewed servitude, in order that he, this one true believer, may become the everlasting witness to its power and splendour. It wrestles with him, as the angel did with Jacob, throughout the long night of life until the rosy dawn when death claims him; and never does he find release until he has blessed it. Dostoeffsky, the "servant of God," comprehends the magnitude of this message, and finds his greatest happiness in that he is to be coerced for ever by illimitable forces. He kisses the cross with fever-parched lips. "Nothing is more necessary to man than to bow his head in face of the infinite." Broken beneath the burden of his destiny, he still has strength to raise pious hands as testimony to the greatness and holiness of life.

By accepting his thraldom to fate, Dostoeffsky, through meekness and intuition, became the victor over suffering, and the mightiest master and the most complete transmuter of values since the days of the Testament. Through struggle he grew strong; the hammer-blows on the anvil of his life forged his supreme powers. The more debilitated his body, the higher soared his faith; the greater his sufferings as a man, the easier was it for him to perceive the meaning and the need for worldwide suffering. Amor fati, a resigned love of one's destiny, a thing Nietzsche looked upon as the most fruitful law of life, permitted Dostoeffsky to see in every hostility, fulfilment, and in every trial, salvation. As with Balaam, curses turned to the chosen one's advantage, and became a blessing; humiliation was metamorphosed into exaltation. While in Siberia with chains clanking at his ankles, he penned an ode to the tsar who was the real author of the sentence which had consigned an innocent man to penal servitude; with what seems to us an incomprehensible humility, he was ever kissing the hand that chastened him. Thus he was always ready to bear witness to the beauty of life. Like a Lazarus rising livid from the tomb, he came back daily to consciousness from the imminence of death and from the convulsive twitchings of his epileptic seizures; while the foam still flecked his lips he rallied his energies to sing a hymn of praise to the deity who sent such trials. With every fresh affliction, a renewed love of suffering was awakened in his heart; unquenchable was his thirst, almost masochistic his yearning, for the martyr's crown. Each time that fate dealt him a blow, though his head was bloody and his body crushed, he sighed for other blows from the same hand. The lightnings that struck him, he gathered up as it were, and transformed that

which was to have consumed him into spiritual fire and creative ecstasy.

Such an amazing power for transfiguring experiences cuts the ground from beneath the feet of destiny and deprives it of its dominion. That which might appear as punishment and trial to an ordinary man, when contemplated through the sage's eyes is seen to be helpful; a visitation which is calculated to crumple up an ordinary mortal, puts the poet, the creative artist, on his mettle. A visitation which would crush the weak, steels the ecstatic's strength to fresh endeavour. The nineteenth century affords us a striking example of this varying reaction to similar circumstances. Oscar Wilde was hit by the same kind of thunderbolt. He, too, an author whose name was already famous, a man of good position, was torn from the cultured world in which he moved, and was herded in prison among criminals. But, whereas Wilde was crushed by this tribulation, Dostoeffsky came out of an identical martyrdom like pure metal from a fiery furnace. Oscar Wilde feels overpowered by the shame inflicted upon him, by the ostracism he will have in future to suffer from his peers, for he is pre-eminently a social being, a society man whose instincts are turned to outward things; for him it is an intolerable humiliation that, when he enters Reading Gaol, the bath he must take is one in which the water has already served for the ablutions of ten of his fellow-convicts. Belonging to a privileged, a delicately nurtured class, his shudder at this enforced contact with the crowd is the shudder of the aristocrat compelled to rub shoulders with the canaille. Dostoeffsky, however, the new man who rises superior to class distinctions, feels delight instead of repulsion at having thus to mingle with the masses. For him, the dirty bathwater becomes a

purgatorial fire for the cleansing of his soul from pride. When he helps a Tatar to wash, he thrills ecstatically, for in imagination he participates in the Christian mystery of the washing of feet. Wilde, for whom to be a gentleman is something more than to be a man, fears lest his fellow-prisoners may take him to be one of themselves, a fear which adds greatly to his torment: Dostoeffsky suffers only in so far as the thieves and murderers among whom he lives deny him their friendship; for he feels every reserve on their part, every lack of brotherly affection, as a flaw in his own human kindness, as a personal insufficiency. Just as coal and diamonds are the products of one and the same element, so is this duplex destiny one and the same for these two men, and yet so different in its reactions on them both. Wilde's career is finished when he emèrges from prison, Dostoeffsky's is merely begun; Wilde is consumed to a valueless ash in the same fires which steel Dostoeffsky to a brilliant hardness. Because he would defend himself from fate's blows, Wilde is chastised like an unruly thrall; but Dostoeffsky, who clasps his fate to his heart and loves it, triumphs over all its onslaughts.

Dostoeffsky is so consummate in his skill as a transmuter, he is so dexterous in changing what should have been a humiliation into an exaltation, that destiny's bludgeonings can only serve to develop his powers. Through the extremest dangers he wins to inner security, so that his torment is a gain, his vices become stepping-stones to higher things, his inhibitions are encouragements. Siberia, the katorga, epilepsy, poverty, his craze for gambling, his sensuality, all the crises he went through, became, thanks to his stupendous powers of sublimation, fruitful assets to his art. For, just as the most precious of metals are grubbed from

the deep recesses of a mine, amid manifold dangers, far beneath the smooth, safe ways of ordinary existence, so the artist can secure his most burning truths, his final realizations, only from the most perilous abysses of his own nature. From the point of view of art, Dostoeffsky's life may be considered a tragedy; but, from the ethical outlook, it is an achievement without precedent, because it constitutes the triumph of a man over his destiny, a transformation of the exterior life by the might of an inner urge.

Above all, it is a triumph of the spiritual forces over a body undermined by illness and weakened by suffering. For we must never forget that Dostoeffsky was a sick man, that his imperishable work was wrought by flagging limbs and racked nerves. He was ever in the presence of death; he suffered from epileptic fits during the thirty years of his literary activity. The hand of the "strangling demon" might seize hold of him at any moment, when he was in the midst of work, or walking in the street, or while in converse with a friend. Even in sleep he was not spared. As a child he was easily overwrought, and experienced strange hallucinations; but the "holy sickness" did not manifest itself in its full virulence until later, during his sojourn in Siberia; thenceforward, like all his other trials, his poverty and his privations, it remained with him till the end of his days. Dostoeffsky never complained of his martyrdom, as did Beethoven about his deafness, Byron about his misshapen foot, or Rousseau about his bladder trouble. Nor can we find any evidence that he ever seriously sought to be cured. We may even go so far as to suppose that, with his inexhaustible "amor fati," he could include this terrible affliction within the compass of his love. Dostoeffsky, by

taking an artistic and scientific interest in his troubles, achieved mastery over them.

He is able to convert his sickness, the greatest menace to his life and reason, into the sublimest secret of his art: he extracts a mysterious beauty from it, and allows us to savour with him the wonderful moments immediately preceding the attacks. Death in the midst of life is then, he tells us, presented in a quintessential form; "pure being," in this moment of imminent destruction, is felt to be something rapturous and sublime; life is quickened to become a "consciousness of self" stretched to such a point of tension as to be morbid in its vehemence. Such moments recurred at frequent intervals, so that the seconds when he stood bound in the Semenoffsky Square were perpetually being renewed, as if it were fate's purpose to prevent his forgetting the awesome contrast between All and Nothingness.

Like water from an overfilled vessel, his soul flows from his body; it flutters upward towards God; a celestial ray shines down on the disembodied spirit, bringing light and grace from another world; earth recedes; the music of the spheres becomes audible. But the thunder of awakening crashes into the vision and hurls the would-be stormer of heaven back into the world of everyday life. Each time Dostoeffsky describes the moment which precedes the epileptic attack, his words assume the lilt of a pæan: "You who enjoy good health never suspect the delight which permeates us epileptics a second before the seizure. Mahomet tells us in the Koran that he beheld paradise, that he was there during the fleeting moment while the water ran out of his overturned pitcher; and the wiseacres affirm that he was a liar. But he was no liar. He undoubtedly visited paradise during an epileptic fit (for he suffered from epilepsy

just as I do). I cannot tell how long these moments of bliss last . . . but you may believe me when I say that I would not forgo them were I offered all the joys of earth in exchange."

In this electrifying second, Dostoeffsky reaches out beyond the sublunary and embraces infinitude. But he does not tell us of the grievous suffering with which he must pay for his convulsive approach towards God's throne. Collapse follows, during which the crystalline moment is shattered to atoms; with weary limbs and benumbed senses he falls back, like another Icarus, into the pitchy night of our planet. Feeling, still dazzled by the incandescent light, moves uneasily within the prison of the body; the senses, blinded by the splendour of God's presence, and stunned as soon as the light is withdrawn, crawl wearily across the floor of existence. After every attack, Dostoeffsky lies in a penumbral darkness, when his condition borders on idiocy; the horror of this state is described by Prince Myshkin with merciless lucidity. He takes to his bed, his limbs battered and bruised, his tongue refusing to obey, his hand too listless to hold the pen: sullen and exhausted, he denies himself to any who may wish to see him. The clarity of mind, which but a moment before had enabled him to compress a thousand units into one harmonic whole, is darkened; he cannot remember the simplest fact; the threads which bind him to life, to the world around him, to his work, are severed. While he was writing *The Possessed*, he found as he emerged from one of his fits that he could recall neither the events of his own creation nor even the names of his characters. It was only by slow degrees that he was able to relive the world he had imagined, and with difficulty that he could rekindle the fires of inspiration. His finest achieve-

ment, the great novels, were written against a background of poverty and privation, with epilepsy always threatening, and the taste of death upon his lips. With the confidence of a sleepwalker, he strides along the narrow ridgeway between madness and death, creating mighty works as he proceeds. From the perpetual contact with death there arises again and ever again that elemental energy which is eager to clasp life in order to inspire it with the supremest power and passion.

As Merezhkoffsky has so brilliantly pointed out, Dostoeffsky's genius owed as deep a debt to this illness, as Tolstoy's to his radiant health. It was the malady which enabled Dostoeffsky to soar upward into a sphere of such concentrated feeling as is rarely experienced by normal men; it permitted him to penetrate into the underworld of the emotions, into the submerged regions of the psyche. The duplexity of his nature, the power of wakefulness in the midst of dreams, the way in which his intellect crept into every labyrinth of the emotions, provided him with the means of giving to pathological occurrences their metaphysical content, and of elucidating that which hitherto only the dissecting knife of science had been able, inadequately, to lay bare on the post-mortem table. Like Odysseus, the man of many journeyings, the messenger from Hades, so Dostoeffsky, the only one to return from the land of the shades in full possession of his faculties, describes with painstaking precision his experiences there, and bears witness to the existence of undreamed-of conditions 'twixt life and death. Because of his malady, he was able to achieve that highest of arts, for which Stendhal found the formula: "inventer des sensations inédites"; emotions which exist in us all in the germ, but which, on account of

the coldness of our blood, rarely blossom into full maturity. The delicate aural perception of the invalid permits him to surprise the least syllable of the language of the soul ere it sinks beneath the waters of delirium; his finely poised feelings lead him to a vigorous synthesis of the vibrations of the senses; and a mystical penetration bestows on him, in the moment preluding the fit, the gift of second sight, and the power to perceive analogies. This is indeed a transfiguration, one that is pregnant with meaning in emotional crises. Dostoeffsky the artist annexes every danger that comes his way, making it his own: thereby, Dostoeffsky the man acquires renewed greatness, a greatness of wider scope.

For him happiness and suffering are the goal towards which the feelings strive; they represent an unequally enhanced intensity; he does not appraise his experience by the familiar standards of average life, but by a measuring-rod adapted to the exaltations of his own frenzy. For ordinary beings the acme of happiness is achieved by the contemplation of a landscape, by the possession of a woman, by a sense of harmonious completeness; always it is the enjoyment of some earthly good. The climax of sensibility in Dostoeffsky, on the other hand, is to be found in the realm of the unbearable, in the region of death. His happiness is a spasm, a cramp, with foam at the lips; his torment is collapse, destruction; always the essential condition is one which has no appreciable duration here on earth, and which is compressed with lightning speed into an infinitesimal fraction of time; these moments attain so high a temperature, that it is impossible to hold them more than a second in the hand. One who in life experiences death knows more intimately the sensation of primitive horror

than does a normal man. He whose spirit has soared free of the body experiences a more sublime delight than one who knows nothing but the corporeal world. The former's idea of happiness is entrancement; his concept of suffering is annihilation. For him, therefore, happiness is not merely an enhanced cheerfulness, but a condition in which the fires attain incandescent heat, a condition tremulous with tears, and aware of the proximity of danger; it is an unbearable and unstable condition, a torture rather than a joy. Again, the suffering such a one endures is not the breathless anxiety experienced by ordinary mortals; he has crossed the bridge, leaving behind him trouble and dread, to enter a world of icy, almost smiling, clarity, a region filled with a craving for bitterness, where tears are unknown, where hollow laughter and a devilish snigger verging on pleasure greet the traveller at every turn. No one before Dostoeffsky has been able with such skill to lay bare the polarity of the emotions, the perpetual swing from ecstasy to annihilation, the extremes of joy and pain.

Dostoeffsky can only be understood in the light of this polarity. He is the victim of a duplex life; and, since he accepts his fate with passionate approval, he becomes the enthusiastic portrayer of its contrasts. It is to the friction between these opposing elements that he owes the ardour of his temperament; and, far from trying to reconcile them, he severs them as widely as possible asunder, sending them flying upward to heaven or down into the nethermost hell. The wound of this severance is never allowed to heal in the fires of creation. Dostoeffsky the artist is the most perfect example of antinomy, the greatest dualist, that art, and maybe humanity, has ever known.

One of his vices, his love of gambling, illustrates in a

symbolical manner this fundamental duality of his nature. Already as a boy he is passionately fond of a game of cards; but it is not until he comes to Europe that he learns the devil's dance his nerves can lead him. Rouge et noir, roulette; these are peculiarly dangerous games for a man of his temperament. The green table in Baden-Baden, the casino in Monte Carlo, afford him the greatest joy he experiences during his travels in the west; they delight him more than the Sistine Madonna, or the sculptures of Michelangelo, or the landscapes of southern climes; art and culture act like a hypnotic upon him. But at the gaming-table his nerves are taut, he must come to a decision: black or red, odd or even, luck or ruin, gain or loss. These are all pressed into one swift second as the wheel turns, a fleeting moment of tension which is fraught with pleasure and with pain, and which finds a counterpart in the antagonisms within his soul. Easy transitions, the reconciliation of opposites, gently ascending enthusiasms, are unbearable to this creature of feverish impatience; not for him a career of steady money-making after the German fashion, like a "sausage manufacturer"; he cares not to grow rich by being cautious and thrifty and calculating; what he loves are the chances of the game—all or nothing! As he sits at the gaming-table, his outward and visible destiny seems, consciously or unconsciously, to take the same course as his will, for ever making further demands on him, so that the moment when he is forced to a decision is curtailed to the utmost; the sensations are at their most acute, as if red-hot nails were being hammered into the tingling nerves; and he experiences a similar uncanny elation as during the second preceding an epileptic fit, or during that other unforgettable second in the Semenoffsky Square. Just as fate

plays with him, so will he now play with fate. He lures chance on to artificial tensions; and at the very moment when he is most secure, he tremblingly stakes his whole existence at the game of hazard. Dostoeffsky is not a gambler because he hungers for money. Like Karamazoff, he has an unquenchable, a "disreputably fanatical," thirst for life; he wants everything distilled into the strongest possible essence, because he has a craving for intoxication, because he wishes to be able to lean over the precipice and contemplate the depths from on high. He loves the abysses of life; he is fascinated by the demon of chance; in frenzied humility he worships the forces which are mightier than his own powers, and always anew he invites their murderous lightnings down upon his head. Dostoeffsky the gambler dares fate to do her worst. Venturing all, what he wins is the extreme of nervous intoxication, mortal agony, dread, a daimonic realization of the world-all. Even when he has drunk of the golden poison, even when he has won, his thirst is not quenched; he immediately begins to yearn anew for the divine elixir.

As in the case of all the passions he yielded to, he pushed his love of gambling to the limit of vice. This titan was temperamentally incapable of calling a halt, of exercising caution, of reflecting whither the passion was leading him. "During the whole of my life, I have invariably overstepped the boundaries," he writes. Now the overstepping of the boundaries is precisely what contributes to his greatness as an artist, but it is this which is so perilous to him as a man. He never pauses at the barriers set up by the bourgeois moral code; and none would venture to say how far his own life exceeded the limits permitted by the law, or how many of the criminal instincts ascribed to his heroes

were in fact a part of himself. One thing is certain, though it is by no means the most important. As a child he cheated at cards; and in later life, like that tragic madman Marmeladoff in *Crime and Punishment*, who stole his wife's stockings in order to procure spirits, Dostoeffsky rifles the cupboards of his home that he may obtain the wherewithal to play roulette. His biographers hesitate to inquire how close may be the analogy between Dostoeffsky's own vagaries and the sensual aberrations depicted in *The Underworld*. Who can tell whether the experiences of those "spiders of voluptuousness," Svidrigailoff and Stavrogin and Fedor Karamazoff, were actual occurrences in the author's life, or merely figments of the imagination? Dostoeffsky's inclinations and abnormalities also have their roots in those strange anomalies of his composition, in his strange longing both for corruption and for innocence; but we need not dwell on such conjectures, even though they may approximate to certainties. What is of importance, however, is for us to recognize that the Christ, the saint, the Alyosha Karamazoff in Dostoeffsky, are closely akin to the sensualist, the overwrought sex maniac, the unclean Fedor Karamazoff in his make-up.

This much we can say with confidence: in his sensuality, Dostoeffsky overstepped the bounds of the bourgeois code, and he did so, not in the mild form ascribed to himself by Goethe who once said that he felt all the impulses to scandalous deeds and criminal offences astir within him. Goethe's whole development was a ceaseless struggle to crush these tendencies and to uproot them. The Olympian longs for harmony, his greatest desire is to do away with contradictions, to quiet the turmoil of the blood, to promote the tranquil functioning of the powers of his soul. He

cuts away the sensuous growths, he destroys for morality's sake every seed which might imperil his art—and thereby as often as not he weakens his gifts! Dostoeffsky, on the other hand, a devotee of his own dualism as of everything else in life, does not desire to achieve a harmony which, so far as he is concerned, is a petrified condition; he refuses to fetter his inherent contradictions by imposing a "divine harmony" upon them. On the contrary, he strains them to the utmost so that they touch both God and the Devil, and have the universe between their two extremes. He desires life, unending life. Life is for him the only electrical discharge between the poles of his dualism. The seed within him, whether of good or of evil, must strain upward, so that in the rays of his passion it may blossom and bear fruit. He allows his vices to flourish, his instincts to grow unchecked; his criminal tendencies are folded securely in the underground welter of his life. He loves his vices and his illness; he loves gambling; he loves his wantonness and even his sensuousness; he loves them because they constitute the metaphysic of the flesh, a will to infinite enjoyment. Goethe's endeavour is to reach the Apollonian state of classical antiquity: Dostoeffsky's goal is Dionysian. He does not wish to become an Olympian; he does not want to resemble a god; all he desires is to be man, and to be this intensely. His ethic is not of the classical type, it does not comply to any norm: all it strives at is intensity. To live properly is, for him, to live strongly, to experience the whole sum of experience whether it be good or bad, to experience as vividly and as frenziedly as possible. For this reason, Dostoeffsky never sought a norm: what he aimed at was the fullness of life. His contemporary, Tolstoy, would often pause in the midst of work to question him-

self; he would abandon art, to ask whether what he wrote was for good or for evil, whether he was ordering his existence wisely or not. Tolstoy's life was, therefore, didactic, a treatise on good conduct: Dostoeffsky's life was a work of art, a tragedy, the fulfilment of a destiny. He did not work towards a specific aim, nor consciously; he did not stop to examine his motives; all he did was to steel himself. Tolstoy made public avowal of his shortcomings, accusing himself of the seven deadly sins. Dostoeffsky held his tongue; but his silence was more eloquent than all Tolstoy's self-accusatory diatribes put together. Dostoeffsky refused to judge his own conduct; he did not wish to change anything in his behaviour, or to better his proclivities: one desire alone possessed him—to acquire strength. He put up no struggle against what was evil and perilous in his nature: on the contrary, he loved these innate dangers because they acted as a spur; he exalted his sin so that his repentance might be more intense, and held up his pride to veneration in order to enjoy the subsequent humiliation the more. It would be childish to gloss over the satanic factors of his make-up, factors that were so closely akin to the divine; foolish to try to excuse his moral lapses; unpardonable to force into the petty leading-strings of bourgeois harmony, that which had the elemental beauty of the unmeasurable.

The Karamazoffs, the figure of the student in *A Raw Youth*, Stavrogin in *The Possessed*, Svidrigailoff in *Crime and Punishment*, these fanatics of the flesh, these demons of lascivious enjoyment, these initiates and masters of obscenity, are all of them the creations of one who had made personal acquaintance with the lowest forms of sensuality; for it is essential, if such figures are to be endowed to the full with grim reality, that he who conjures them out of

the void shall be filled with a spiritualized love of debauchery. Dostoeffsky's incomparable sensitiveness made him acquainted with eroticism in its twofold sense; for he knew the passionate intoxication of the flesh, when love lies sprawling in the slime and becomes debauchery; he had had experience of its most degraded forms, when it had become iniquity and crime; he had contemplated it behind every conceivable disguise; and had smiled at its every frenzy with sympathetic understanding. But he had also made acquaintance with love in its noblest aspects, when it had sloughed its earthly integument; when it was inspired with compassion, with holy pity, with a sense of the brotherhood of mankind; when it melted into tears. All these strange essences were a part of his very self; they were not ephemeral chemical traces such as are to be found in most great artists, but the purest and most pungent distillations.

Every transgression is depicted by Dostoeffsky against a background of sexual excitement, and with an actual vibration of the senses; many of them seem to have been personal experiences tinged with pleasure. And in writing thus I do not wish to imply that Dostoeffsky was a debauchee; only those who are woefully ignorant of him and his works could be guilty of so wrongheaded an impression. He was far from being a man of pleasure, a sensualist. Just as he sought suffering for suffering's sake, so likewise did he seek out pleasure for pleasure's sake; he was the servant of his impulses, the thrall of a domineering inquisitiveness concerning matters both spiritual and physical, the slave of an insatiable curiosity which scourged him forward into dangerous adventures and into the thorny thicket of aberration. Even when he yielded to the lusts of the flesh, he did not

do so in a spirit of vulgar enjoyment, but in playful mood, looking upon such pleasures as the expression of vital energy. His lapses were indulged in with a view to experiencing again and again the strange and tempestuous sensations of the epileptic fit, to living through that concentration of the emotions which preceded the attack, to suffering the subsequent and inevitable pangs of compunction. The one thing he loves while thus indulging is the beckoning peril, the tingling play of the nerves, the workings of nature within his own body; he seeks, with a strange mingling of consciousness and dimly felt shame, the counterpart to every passion, the foundation of repentance; in infamy he is on the watch for innocence, in crime he searches out the risks. His sensuality is a maze wherein every path is swallowed up; God and beast dwell side by side in the flesh. Once we have grasped this, we can understand the symbolism of the Karamazoff family; we can grasp the significance of the fact that Alyosha, the angel, the saint, was the son of Fedor, the foul "spider of voluptuousness." Voluptuousness procreates cleanliness, sin engenders greatness, lust is the parent of suffering, and suffering in its turn gives birth to lust. Contrasts are eternally producing contrasts: a whole universe lies spread out betwixt heaven and hell, betwixt God and the Devil.

The secret of Dostoeffsky's greatness lies in his limitless, restless, conscious, and defenceless surrender to his duplex destiny; this amor fati is the wellspring of his creative ecstasy. Because life was lavished so abundantly upon him and opened up such vistas of emotional suffering, he was able to love all that was terrible and good, divine and incomprehensible and everlastingly mysterious, in life. For his standard of measurement is eternity. Never

does he want the current of existence to flow less torrentially; on the contrary, he would gladly accelerate its speed. He therefore takes no trouble to avoid dangers, inasmuch as they provide opportunities for sensation and for inflaming the nerves. The germs of good and of evil, the passions and vices that have lain dormant within him from birth, are aroused and intensified by his own inspiration and ecstasy. In this hazardous game of life, this passionate interplay of forces, Dostoeffsky, urged on by his gambler's instinct, is continually putting his own self as stake upon the table—for it is only in the alternations of black and red, of death and life, that he can savour to the full the bitter-sweet voluptuousness of existence. "You placed me here; you will lead me forth again," says Dostoeffsky to Mother Nature, as Goethe did before him. He never dreams of trying to amend his destiny, to evade it, or to mitigate its harshness. He does not seek fulfilment or surcease or a peaceful conclusion, but an amplification of life through suffering; he stretches his emotions to greater and greater tensity, in order to attain to the maximum degree of feeling. He does not, like Goethe, wish to stiffen into a crystal; he would rather remain a flame, daily consuming himself in order daily, everlastingly, to revivify himself, to find himself anew, with powers magnified and with more salient contrasts. He does not want to conquer life but to feel it. Nor does he choose to be the master of his fate; rather does he prefer to remain a loyal servitor. It was only thus, by electing to be God's thrall, the most abject of his slaves, that he could attain to so profound a knowledge of all things human.

Dostoeffsky confided the control of his destiny into the hands of fate herself, and thereby he triumphed over tem-

poral chances. He was the archetypal man, subject to the everlasting powers; in him was resurrected, amid the clarity and scientific precision of our epoch, the bard of a mystic age, the sorcerer and seer, the frenzied prophet, the man of destiny. There was much of the primitive and heroic age in him. Other literary achievements rise from the levels of time like flowery hills, testifying to their evolution from the primal forces, but softened by time, and approachable even in their highest peaks which thrust snowcapped heads upward into the infinite. But the crests of Dostoeffsky's creations appear fantastic and grey, stony and bare and pitiless like the cone of an active volcano. Yet within that riven breast of his is a glow that comes from the molten core of our world. Aghast, we sense in his destiny and in his work the mysterious abysses of the universally human. As we gaze into this fiery heart, we realize that we are in touch with the timeless and primordial energies of the race.

DOSTOEFFSKY'S CHARACTERS

Oh, do not believe in the unity of men!
DOSTOEFFSKY

SINCE he himself is volcanic, his heroes are volcanic too, for each man testifies in the long run to the God who created him. Not one of Dostoeffsky's characters is at ease in our world; in every case their sensibilities reach back to the fundamental problems of life. The modern neurotic in them is intimately welded to the primitive being who knows naught of life but its passions; and, while pattering the formulas of the most recent acquisitions of knowledge, they propound the riddle of existence. Their forms have not yet cooled and acquired definitive shape, their physiognomies have not been smoothed and polished. They are unfinished, and are therefore endowed with twice the amount of vitality granted to ordinary men. A perfected human being is incapable of further development; whereas Dostoeffsky's creations, being unperfected, being uncompleted, are full of infinite potentiality. Human beings are heroes for him, and therefore worth depicting, only so long as they are problematic creatures, rent in sunder by conflicting trends: he shakes off his mature characters, just as a tree shakes off its ripe fruit. Dostoeffsky loves his creations only so long as they suffer, only so long as they manifest in a high degree the conflicting tendencies in his own life, so long as they are chaotic, so long as this primal disorder can shape itself into destiny.

If we are fully to appreciate Dostoeffsky's heroes, we cannot do better than compare them with those of other authors. Let us take any one of Balzac's heroes as typical of the heroes of French romance. We are immediately confronted by a rectilinear figure, circumscribed and inwardly complete. A concept as plain and unmistakable, and as conformable to laws, as a geometrical figure. Each one of Balzac's characters is moulded from the same clay throughout, is composed of a substance all parts of which give identical responses when tested in the laboratory of the spiritual chemist. They are elements, and as such possess the essential qualities of elements, that is to say they have conventional forms of reaction in the moral and psychical spheres. They can hardly be called human beings, for they have become little more than qualities turned to men, instruments of precision to record a passion. Any of his characters might just as well be named after the quality portrayed: Rastignac might be called Ambition; Goriot, Self-Immolation; Vautrin, Anarchy. In each of these individuals, an overmastering impulse has absorbed the other inner forces, and has pressed them into the service of the ruling passion. They can so easily be pigeon-holed because every one of them has but a single mainspring of energy built into his soul, and it is this which enables him to play his part in human society. Each of these persons falls like a bolt from the blue into the very midst of life. We are, indeed, tempted to describe them as automata, so precise is the way in which they react to everything; and they are like machines in that their effective work and their powers of resistance are calculable by anyone acquainted with their technique. He who is well versed in Balzac's books, can foresee the reactions of the characters with the same confidence as that

with which a physicist can calculate the trajectory of a projectile. Old Grandet, this reincarnation of Harpagon, thus inevitably becomes more and more avaricious as his daughter becomes more heroic and self-sacrificing. Goriot, on the other hand, even in the days when he is well-to-do and can afford to have his wig carefully powdered, is just the sort of man who will, when evil times come, sell his coat to provide for his daughters, and pawn his very last possession to ease their distress. He could act no otherwise; the unity of his character, the impulses which animate his fleshly tenement and only inadequately succeed in making a human being of him, force him to behave in the way Balzac describes. Balzac's characters, like those of Victor Hugo, Scott, and Dickens, are simple, and they all strive towards an obvious goal. They are unities, and are, therefore, ponderable upon the scales of morality. The multicoloured and variegated things we meet in this cosmos are chance occurrences, concrete happenings. It is experience which is diversified, whereas the personalities are homogeneous, the novel being the stage on which men and women wrestle with the forces of the terrestrial environment. Balzac's heroes, like all the heroes of the French novelists, are either stronger or weaker than the opposing forces of society. They either coerce life into line with their own desires, or are crushed beneath life's wheel.

The heroes of German fiction, such as Wilhelm Meister or Der grüne Heinrich, are not so sure of themselves as their French brethren. There are more cross-currents in them, they are psychologically differentiated, their spiritual composition is polyphonic. Good and evil, strength and weakness, contend for dominance in their souls. They start life bewildered, and the mists of morning veil the clarity

of their vision. They are aware of the forces within them, but these forces have not yet been harmonized or brought into proper relation; they are not yet unified, but are inspired with a will towards unity. In the last resort, the German spirit always aims at orderliness. The personality of the hero is gradually moulded to conform to the German ideal; the man becomes thoroughly efficient; "in the waters of the world the character is upbuilt," as Schiller once said. The elements, which have been jostled together in the hurly-burly of life, settle down in time, and become crystallized; the raw youth steps out of his 'prentice years a fully fledged master; and from the last page of each one of those books, whether it be *Der grüne Heinrich*, or *Hyperion*, or *Wilhelm Meister*, or *Ofterdingen*, the hero looks forth clear-eyed and energetic into a fair and lucid world. Life conciliates itself with the ideal; the disciplined energies are no longer frittered away in spendthrift confusion, but co-ordinated so as to attain the highest aim. Goethe's heroes, and indeed all the heroes created by German authors, reach the goal they set out to win; they realize themselves to the utmost; they become active, practical, and reliable. They learn to apply the lessons of life's experiences.

Dostoeffsky's heroes, on the other hand, neither seek a contact with real life, nor ever find it; that is their peculiarity. They do not wish to penetrate into reality; from the first their aim is to transcend reality, and to pass beyond it into infinity. Their destiny does not exist for them in any outward form, but has a purely esoteric significance. Their kingdom is not of this world. All palpable possession, all values, titles, power, and pelf, are illusory forms so far as they are concerned; such things are worthless whether

as aims (as they are with Balzac) or as means (as they are for the German authors). They have no desire to belong to this world, or to maintain it, or to order it. They do not spare themselves, but squander themselves; they do not calculate consequences but remain for ever incalculable. Unstable by temperament, they seem at first idle dreamers; yet it is only their outward aspect which gives the impression of vacancy. They are not concerned about externals. Their gaze is turned inward; all the ardour and fire of their natures is concentrated upon their own existence. The Russian intuitively reaches out towards the whole. He wants to become conscious of himself and his life, not of the shadows of these things, or of their reflexion in a mirror, their superficial reality: what he would probe is the vast and mystical and elementary; the cosmic power; the conscious sensation of existence. The deeper we penetrate into Dostoeffsky's works, the more do we discern the fundamentally primitive, almost fanatical urge towards life, the keen awareness of being, the archetypal yearning, not so much for happiness or pain (which are specific forms of life, implying valuation, and differentiation), as for an integral, unified pleasure, such as we feel when we breathe. These creatures of Dostoeffsky's universe wish to drink at the fountain-head, not from the pipes and conduits in the streets of our cities; they want to feel eternity, the infinite, within their hearts, and to escape the temporal. The only world they have cognizance of is the one that has no end; they do not know anything about the social world. They neither desire to study life, nor to constrain it; they wish merely to feel it, to feel it as the ecstasy of existence.

At first these figures appear somewhat artless; they are antagonistic to the world because they love the world, and

they seem unreal because of their eager regard for reality. They have no visible aim; they grope and stumble like drunken men. They come to a standstill, look around, ask every conceivable question, and, ere the answer is forthcoming, they have departed into the void. They seem to have but lately emerged into this world of ours, and not yet to have found their bearings. They would be difficult to understand, did we not remember of a sudden that they are Russians, the children of a nation abruptly thrust into our European culture from a millennial and barbaric unconsciousness. Wrenched from the ancient, patriarchal culture of their forbears, they have not yet become accustomed to the new; they stand, hesitant, at the crossways, not knowing which road to choose; the indecision of each is the indecision of an entire people. We Europeans dwell amid our old traditions as in a cosily warmed house. The Russian of the nineteenth century, the Russian of Dostoeffsky's day, had burned the log-cabin of a barbarous antiquity, but had not yet built his new habitation. He was uprooted, and had no idea which path to follow. The strength of youth, the strength of the primitive, was still his; but his instincts were confused before the complexity of the problems with which he was faced: his hands were eager and strong, but they did not know what to seize on first. Thus they grabbed at everything, and were never satiated. Herein we sense the tragedy underlying Dostoeffsky's figures, underlying every cleavage in their natures, every inhibition; for it is the same tragedy which underlay the destiny of the Russian nation. The Russia of the mid-nineteenth century did not know whither it was going, whether towards the west or towards the east, towards Europe or towards Asia, towards Petersburg, the "artificial city," and civilization, or

back to the peasant smallholding in the boundless steppe. Turgeneff pushed his compatriots forwards; Tolstoy held them back. Everything was in a flux. Tsarism stood contraposed to anarchist communism; orthodoxy was running wild and giving birth to atheism. Nothing was stable, nothing had a fixed value: the stars of faith no longer shone in the firmament above the heads of the Russian multitudes, and law had left its abiding place in their hearts. Old traditions were uprooted, and Dostoeffsky's men and women were true to type; they were transitional creatures, with chaos in their souls, burdened with inhibitions and uncertainties. Everlastingly affrighted and intimidated, humiliated and affronted—because they knew not who they were, whether of much value or worthless—they stood on the dividing line between pride and self-contempt, constantly looking over their shoulders to see what others were about, wretched and anxious lest they were making themselves a laughing-stock. They were for ever ashamed: at one moment the wearing of a shabby fur coat would put them to the blush, at another they would feel abashed on behalf of the entire Russian nation. The ever-present sense of shame made them uneasy and bewildered. Their feelings lacked anchorage, guidance, measure, and law; lacked the protective garment of tradition and the support of a philosophy, the intellectual heritage of many generations. They were rudderless and adrift on the waters of an unexplored ocean. None of their questions had been answered, no road had been made straight for their pilgrimage. They were essentially a people in an age of transition, a people belonging to the beginning of time. Each of them was a Cortés: they had burned their boats, and were marching forth into the unknown.

And the marvel of their emergence lay in the fact that, because they were a people of a primal age, within each of them the world was beginning afresh. The problems which for us had long since petrified into definite concepts, were still white-hot and full of vital interest for them. Our beaten tracks, so comfortable to tramp along, beset with moral railings and ethical fingerposts, had yet to be made for them. They were still fighting their way through the primeval forest towards the boundless and eternal verities. Nowhere could they see the steeples of certainty, the bridges of confidence: for them there was as yet no egress from the divine chaos of the primitive universe. Just as in recent days Lenin and Trotzky, so the men of those days felt that the world-order must be built anew; that was and is the incalculable significance of the Russian in relation to old Europe, fossilized in its ancient culture; for here was a whole nation agog with a pristine curiosity, eager to propound once again the vital questions, and to wring an answer from eternity. We had cooled down, had become indolent and were resting on our cultural laurels; they were still incandescent. So in Dostoeffsky's books, each character endeavours to review the old problems; each in turn, though his hands are bloodied by the task, removes the boundary stones between good and evil; each in turn transforms his own chaos into a world. Each possesses the attributes of a servant and a prophet of the new Christ, a martyr and a herald of the Third Realm. The chaos of the prime is still within each of them; but there is also the dawning glimmer of the first day, which was to bring light upon the earth; there are likewise premonitions of the sixth day, during which man was created. Dostoeffsky's characters are the pathfinders into another world, his

novels form the background to the mythus of the new men who are to be born of the Russian spirit.

A myth, however, and especially a national myth, needs faith to sustain it. These creatures cannot be grasped through the lucid medium of reason. Feelings, brotherly love, can alone find the way to understand them. To a man of common sense, to the practically minded Englishman or American, the four Karamazoffs must appear as so many types of madmen, as the inmates of a lunatic asylum built to house them by their begetter. For happiness, which is and ever must be the first and the last aim of one endowed with a healthy, simple, earthly nature, seems to these strange beings a matter of indifference. Open any one of the fifty thousand books which our western Europe produces year after year. What is their central theme? Happiness! A woman desires the man of her fancy, or someone wants to become rich, or to be placed in a position of power, or to be honoured; these wishes are all in the natural order of things. Dickens leads us to the charming little rose-clad cottage among verdant trees, the home where there is a bevy of children clustering round the hearth; Balzac's ideal is a castle, a title, and many millions. Let us look around us in the streets, the shops, the stuffy and foul slum dwellings, the palatial rooms of the wealthy; what do the crowds we see want? They all want to be happy, content, rich, powerful. Which of Dostoeffsky's characters has any desire for these things? Not one! They do not wish to rest anywhere; not even in a state of happiness. All of them yearn to go forward; they possess aspiring hearts, which never give them a moment's respite from self-torture. They are indifferent to happiness, indifferent even to content. Wealth seems to them despicable rather

than desirable. Strange beings that they are, they have no craving for the ordinary goods of this world, nor do they strive to attain the familiar goals aspired to by persons with common sense. For they have uncommon sense, and the everyday world is of no moment to them.

Are they, then, to be looked upon as phlegmatic, unconcerned, ascetic? Nothing of the sort. The persons of Dostoeffsky's novels are, let me repeat, men of a new beginning. For all the lucidity of their mental powers, for all their high gifts, they are at heart children, and have the desires of a child: they have no particular wishes, either for this specific thing or for that other; what they want is All. They would embrace all good and all evil, all heat and all cold, all those things which are close at hand and all those which are at an infinite distance. They are exaggerators, insatiable, exorbitant in their demands. I said that they want nothing of this world. But herein I erred. They want, let me reiterate, not one thing, but everything —all that is in the world's gift to bestow, all its emotions, all its depths: life itself, in full measure, heaped up, pressed down, and running over. No weaklings are they, not Lovelace, nor Hamlet, nor Werther, nor René: their muscles are hard, and they are filled with a fierce hunger for life; they are beasts of prey, Karamazoffs, who drain the cup to the dregs before dashing it to the ground. Above everything else they seek the superlative, a fiery glow of sensation which would consume the ordinary individual; they swim in the molten stream of world-feeling. Like a Malay who is running amuck, they storm forward into life, lapsing from concupiscence into repentance, turning from repentance back again to wrongdoing, speeding from crime into avowal, from avowal into ecstasy; thus they

rush along the highways and byways of their destiny, unflagging to the end, when they drop with foam upon their lips, or are struck down by an alien hand. How immense is their thirst for life! A youthful nation in its entirety, a new mankind, inspired with an eager appetence for knowledge and truth. Is there one single character in Dostoeffsky's works who breathes peacefully, who is at rest, who has achieved his goal? Not one. They are all of them engaged in a race towards the heights or towards the depths; for, as Alyosha tells us, he who has made the initial step cannot call a halt until he has reached the goal of his pilgrimage. They clutch and grab to right and to left, in frost or under scorching skies; their desires are insatiable, for they inhabit a finite world, and are ever striving to grasp the infinite. From the bowstring of their strength they are shot upward into the blue, and fly like arrows skyward, for ever in the direction of the unattainable, for ever aiming at the stars, each one of them a flame of unrest. Unrest is torture: and therefore all these beings of Dostoeffsky's creation suffer intensely; their faces are twisted with pain, they live in a state of feverish excitement, in a perpetual spasm. A famous Frenchman has described Dostoeffsky's world as "a hospital for neurotics"; and, when we first glimpse it, that is indeed the impression it arouses. How dreary and fantastic it seems. Taverns reeking of brandy, the cells of prisons, lairs in slum dwellings, brothels and pothouses! Emerging from a Rembrandtesque murk is a group of ecstatic faces: the murderer, raising hands stained with the blood of his victim; the toper, amid a grinning circle of appreciative cronies; the girl with the yellow license, lurking in the twilit alley; the epileptic child, begging at a street corner; the man in the Siberian katorga

who had killed seven people; the gambler pommelled by his comrades; the honest thief who lies dying upon a filthy bed—what an underworld of the emotions do they not all portray, what a veritable Hades of the passions! Tragical, indeed, are these beings; a typically Russian sky overhangs them, a lowering, grey, and crepuscular sky, darkening the landscape and weighing down the hearts of these poor mortals. It is a country of dire misfortune, a wilderness of despair, a purgatory whence there is no reprieve, wherein there is neither mercy nor justice.

Dark, labyrinthine, strange, inimical, does this Russian world appear when we first cross its frontier. It seems to be aflood with suffering, and the earth, as Ivan Karamazoff grimly observes, "is drenched with tears to its core." But just as Dostoeffsky's countenance at first gives the impression of being gloomy, strained, peasantlike, and depressed, though as soon as we catch sight of his radiant brow we find it suffuses the remainder of the face with light, relieving its features of all earthly blemishes and illuminating its shadows with faith—so in his works the heavy load of matter is suffused with spiritual fires. Dostoeffsky's world seems to be entirely composed of suffering; yet only to outward seeming does the sum of all the pains in his work appear to be greater than in that of any other author. For, being true children of Dostoeffsky's brain, these figures are able to transmute their feelings; they drive their emotions, and overdrive them, from contrast to contrast. Suffering, their own personal pain, is often their greatest felicity. Something labours within them to pit their voluptuousness, their lust for happiness, against their sorrow, their lust for pain; for their suffering is also their happiness, they hold to it tenaciously, they warm it at their breasts,

they fawn upon it with caressive fingers, they worship it with their whole soul. They would, indeed, be the unhappiest of mortals did they fail to love it.

This metamorphosis, this mad and frenzied metamorphosis, of emotion within them, this perpetual transmutation of values which goes on in the hearts of Dostoeffsky's figures, can perhaps be best illustrated by an example. I choose one that recurs in a thousand forms throughout his books: the grief caused by a humiliation—whether it be an actual or an imaginary humiliation matters little. Some simple-minded, sensitive creature, a lesser official, or, maybe, a general's daughter, is affronted. Pride has been mortified by a word, a mere nothing. This initial mortification constitutes the primary affect which brings the whole organism into revolt. The victim takes umbrage, suffers, lies in ambush awaiting other affronts. A second mortification inevitably occurs, and we witness a heaping-up of suffering. But, marvellous to relate, this accumulated suffering no longer causes pain. Of course the person thus affronted continues to lament; but the reason for such an outcry is no longer relevant, inasmuch as the mortification has already become an object of love. The enduring consciousness of having sustained an insult takes shape as an unnatural and secret gratification. The original mortification by which pride had suffered a fall has changed into something new: a sense of martyrdom. Now there sets in a craving for fresh mortifications, for more and ever more insults and affronts. A provocative attitude is assumed, a challenging tone creeps in: suffering has become a longing, a greed, a lust. "I have been humiliated? Very well, then, let me be completely abased!" This is the cry of these creatures, who know not where to stop. Henceforward

such a being clings to his suffering, clenching his teeth in the effort to prevent it escaping: anyone attempting to help him in his plight is looked upon as an enemy. Thus little Nelly throws the powder three times in the doctor's face, Raskolnikoff repulses Sonya's advances, Ilyuchka bites the kindly Alyosha's finger—and they do these things out of a fanatical love for their sufferings. They love their sufferings because they feel life (dear, precious life) therein; because they know that "here on earth one can only love truly and thoroughly by means of suffering"; and that is what they all desire, more than anything else life can give them. It is their strongest proof of existence: instead of "cogito, ergo sum," I think therefore I exist, they would take as their dictum, "I suffer, therefore I exist."

For Dostoeffsky, as for all his characters, "I am," "I exist," is the greatest triumph of life, the superlative sensation of belonging to the universe. Dmitri Karamazoff, in his prison cell, sings a hymn of praise on the subject of this "I exist," on the voluptuous pleasure of "existing"; and it is for the sake of this love of life that so much suffering is necessary. We see, therefore, that it is only on the surface of things that the sum total of suffering appears to be greater in Dostoeffsky's works than in those of any other author. For, if ever there was a world where nothing is inexorably fixed, where, from the deepest chasm, a path leads up to safety, where every misfortune culminates in ecstasy, where every despair is crowned with hope, then that world is Dostoeffsky's world. Are his works anything other than a series of acts of the apostles, of legends dealing with deliverance from suffering through the spirit, depicting conversion to a belief in life, describing a way of the cross that shall lead to knowledge? Is not each of

them a road to Damascus, transferred into the midst of our world?

These beings wrestle on behalf of ultimate truth, in order to discover their universally human ego. The fact that a murder is committed or that a woman is consumed with love matters little; such things are accessory, external. The real stage is set in the souls of men, in the realm of the spirit. Chance happenings in the outer world are no more than mechanical devices, scenic effects. The tragedy invariably takes place within the soul, and embodies a conquest over inhibitions and a battle on behalf of truth. Each one of Dostoeffsky's heroes is asking himself the questions that are occupying the mind of all Russians: "Who am I? What am I worth?" He seeks himself, or, rather, the superlative essence of himself, in the unstable, in the spaceless, in the timeless. He wishes to see himself as God sees him; he wishes to acknowledge himself. Truth is more than a mere need to him; it is an excess, a voluptuousness, an avowal of the most intimate of his pleasures; it is his spasm, his orgasm. The man who dwells in the domain of the spirit, the universal man, the god-man, breaks through all earthly bonds by means of confession; and attains to truth, that is, to God, by way of corporeal existence. How they luxuriate in their confessions! Loath to make avowal, like Raskolnikoff before Porfiry Petrovich, they would nevertheless make it in secret, and then again hide what they are longing to disclose. Anon, they'll cry it from the housetops, avowing more than is really true, discovering their nakedness with the morbidity of an exhibitionist, exaggerating their vices and their virtues. It is here, in these combats for the revelation of the genuine ego, that Dostoeffsky reaches his greatest intensity. Here, in the arena of the inner man,

the big tournaments take place. These are mighty epics of the heart, wherein what is purely Russian is purged away, and the tragedy broadens to include all mankind. The symbolical destiny of Dostoeffsky's figures then becomes explicit and staggering. Again and again, we live through the mystery of self-birth, of the myth created by Dostoeffsky himself: the birth of the new man from the universal humanity which resides in every pilgrim here below.

Self-birth; that is the word I have chosen wherewith to describe the advent of the new man in Dostoeffsky's cosmogony. I should like to tell the story of all Dostoeffsky's characters in the terms of this myth of his; for they all, in the last analysis, experience the same fate, no matter how differently their lives are shaped at the outset. Each of them lives a variation upon one and the same theme: the process of becoming man. We must never forget that Dostoeffsky's art aims at the core of things; and, in so far as his works are psychological studies, he contemplates the man in humanity, the absolute or abstract man who lies far beyond the planes of civilization. For most artists, these planes are still extant; the action of the ordinary novel takes place in a social, erotic, and conventional sphere, and remains there. Dostoeffsky, because he strives to reach the heart of things, pierces through to the universally human in mankind, to the ego which is common to us all. This "ultimate man" is for ever being constructed anew; and for ever the form of his mission is undergoing change.

Dostoeffsky's heroes start from identical beginnings. True to their Russian temperament, they are rendered uneasy by their own vital energy. During puberty, the period of mental and bodily awakening, their cheerful and

free sensibilities become clouded. They are dimly aware that a power is germinating within them, that a mysterious force is driving them on; something seems to be imprisoned, something that is growing, that is welling up and trying to escape from the garment of immaturity. An incomprehensible pregnancy (the new man is taking shape within them, but they know it not) renders them dreamy. They sit in dingy rooms "alone, till they verge on savagery"; by day and by night they brood, thinking about themselves. For years they will remain in this strange condition of ataraxia; like the fakirs, they will bow their heads in contemplation of their navel, trying to catch the sound of the foetal heart. They are prone to all the psychological symptoms characteristic of a woman with child: a hysterical dread of death, a panic fear of life, morbid and horrible cravings, perverse desires.

At length they come to realize that they are gravid with a new idea, and thenceforward their main endeavour is to unfold it. They sharpen their wits like scalpels, they dissect their condition, they vent their oppression in garrulity; they worry their brains until madness threatens; they weld their thoughts into a single, fixed idea, which remains with them till the end, becoming a weapon whose point they aim at their own breast. Kirilloff, Shatoff, Raskolnikoff, Ivan Karamazoff, each of these solitaries has "his own" idea: nihilism, or altruism, or Napoleonic megalomania; each has incubated his fantasy in morbid isolation. Some of them wish to be armed against this new man who is to spring from their loins; their pride cannot suffer him, and they would crush him if they could. Others, again, hope that by over-stimulation they may get the better of this importunate life-pang, may weary it into quiescence.

To keep to the metaphor: they endeavour to rid themselves of the fruit of their brain, just as women will deliberately fall down a flight of stairs, or dance riotously, or take some noxious drug, in the hope of escaping the burden of an unwanted baby. They rave, to drown the plashing of the wellspring of life; sometimes they even destroy themselves, in their eagerness to destroy the germ within. Of set purpose, during these years, they lose themselves. They drink, they gamble, they commit excesses, frantically, to the verge of sanity and beyond—they would not conform to Dostoeffsky's types were it otherwise.

What drives them into vicious paths is the urge of pain, not the prick of a thoughtless sensual appetite. They do not carouse in order to sink into a contented sleep, as the Germans are prone to do; they drink for the sake of intoxication, that they may forget their delusions. Gambling is a means for killing time, not for winning money; in choosing to wander down the road of depravity, they do not seek to gratify their lusts, but, in wanton indulgence, to escape from the confines of their own identity. None the less, being eager to know who or what they actually are, they plumb the depths of their own ego. From the furnace of their lusts they rise upward to God's throne, or sink to the level of beasts; but their constant aim is to discover their own essential humanity. Sometimes, since they are not sure of themselves, they find ways of testing their mettle. Thus Kolya, in order to prove that he is courageous, lies down between the rails and allows a train to roll over him; Raskolnikoff murders the old woman in order to prove that supermen, like Napoleon and himself, are not subject to the moral code which must regulate the doings of ordinary mortals; they all do more than they really

want to do, for each must experience the extremest intensity of feeling. If they are to fathom their own depths, if they are to be able to measure the greatness of their own humanity, they must plunge into every chasm: from sensuality they hurl themselves into depravity, from depravity into cruelty, and so on, downward into the nethermost abyss, a soulless region of ice and of deliberate wickedness. And they do all this out of a transmuted love and longing to know their own essential nature, out of a transmuted form of religious mania. From the haven of sagacity, they drift into the whirlpool of insanity; their mental curiosity degenerates into perversion, their crimes extend to include the violation of children and murder. Yet, paradoxically enough, while their pleasure is thus heightened, they suffer from inappetence; for, even while wallowing in the mire of corruption, they are already troubled by a feeling of contrition.

The more they overtax their senses and their brains, the nearer do they approach to the essence of themselves; and the greater their desire for self-annihilation, the quicker is likely to be their salvation. Their sad bacchanalian orgy was, after all, no more than a convulsive seizure; and their crimes were nothing but the spasm of self-birth. In destroying themselves, they merely do away with the husk enclosing the inner man; such self-destruction is in reality self-preservation in the highest sense of the term. The more they writhe and twist and excite themselves, the more (quite unconsciously) do they hasten the birth; for the new man can only be born in pain. Some strange and tremendous power must play the part of midwife in the hour of travail; goodness must come to their aid; they must be succoured by a love that embraces all mankind.

A concrete deed, an actual crime, one which stretches their senses to breaking-point and fills their hearts with despair, is needed if purity is to be born into the world; and in this case, as in real life, every birth is shadowed by mortal danger. Death and life, those two extremes of human experience, clasp hands in the perilous second when a new being first sees the light.

Such, then, is Dostoeffsky's mythus: the individual ego, a compost of dim and amorphous ingredients, is impregnated with the seed of the true man, that archetypal being of mediæval philosophy who is exempt from the taint of original sin. From each one of us the primal and absolutely divine essence can be born. It is our highest task, our supreme earthly duty, to bring forth this primal and everlasting man from the loins of the contemporary civilized human being. Each of us is already fecundated, for none of us repels life; every mortal here on earth has lovingly received the seed in some blissful moment; but not all those who have been fertilized have allowed the fruit to ripen. Many, being spiritually slothful, have suffered it to rot; the seed has putrefied within them, and poisons those who have left it to perish. Others, again, succumb during labour, and only the child, the idea, is launched upon the world. Kirilloff is such a one; he has to kill himself in order to remain leal: Shatoff is another; he is murdered, that he may testify to the truth within him.

But others, the heroic figures in these novels, are triumphantly successful in their travail. Father Zosima, Raskolnikoff, Stepanovich, Rogozhin, Dmitri Karamazoff, kill their social ego, the larval self, that, like butterflies, they may flutter upward leaving the dead pupa-case behind; from creeping insects they transform themselves into ima-

goes; earthbound creatures become inmates of the skies. The hard crust of psychical inhibitions breaks, and the soul, the universally human soul, emerges and soars back into the infinite. All that was personal and individual fades away, with the result that in the hour of fulfilment these figures resemble one another so closely as to be scarcely distinguishable. Alyosha is hardly to be recognized as different from Zosima, Karamazoff as different from Raskolnikoff, when they step forth from their crimes, their faces still wet with tears, into the light of a new day. Each of Dostoeffsky's novels ends with a catharsis, an emotional cleansing such as we find in Greek tragedy: this is the great atonement. Above the thunder-clouds, in the fresh and sweet atmosphere that follows the storm, flames a glorious rainbow, the Russian emblem of atonement.

Not until they have given birth to the true man, are Dostoeffsky's heroes allowed to enter the true community. Balzac's heroes triumph when they at last conquer society; Dickens's heroes attain their apogee when they settle down into their proper sphere of activity, into the life of a respectable citizen, when they found a family, and are successful in their careers. But the community towards which Dostoeffsky's heroes converge, is no longer social; it has, rather, the attributes of a religious community; these beings do not seek "society"; what they are in search of is world brotherhood. In that brotherhood, hierarchy as ordinarily understood has ceased to exist, for the only gradations are in the degree to which true inwardness, and therefore mystical community, has been achieved. It is of such beings that his novels have to tell. The social community, with its laodicean prides and hates, is an intermediate stage, and is vanquished: the individual man has become universal man;

his aloofness, his segregation, which were nothing but manifestations of pride, have been done away with; in unending humbleness, his heart aglow with love, he greets the brother, the essential man, in each of those he now encounters. These purified men no longer feel that there are any class distinctions; their souls, naked as in paradise, know not shame, or pride, or hatred, or contempt. Criminals and harlots, murderers and saints, princes and drunkards, they hold frank converse in the sphere of essential being, talking heart to heart and soul to soul. One thing alone differentiates them in Dostoeffsky's mind: how far they have attained their innermost and veritable selves, how far they have advanced along the road to a sterlingly genuine humanity. It is a matter of indifference to him how his characters have achieved expiation, how they have won to possession of their real selves. Depravity does not tarnish, crime does not corrupt; there exists, under God, no other tribunal than the conscience. Justice and injustice, good and evil: such words are consumed in the fires of suffering. He whose will is pointed towards truth, finds his atonement: for he who is true, is humble. He who has made open avowal, understands all: for he knows "that the laws formulated by the minds of men are unproven and enigmatic, and that, just as there are no absolutely reliable doctors of medicine, so there are likewise no infallible judges"; he knows that either no man is guilty or else all are, none is entitled to judge another, each is only a brother among brethren. In Dostoeffsky's cosmos, therefore, we find no hopelessly abandoned wretch, no hell with its lowest circle à la Dante, a hell whence Christ himself cannot deliver those who are condemned to suffer its torments. Purgatory he recognizes; and he knows that an erring mor-

tal is filled with finer ardours and is nearer to the true man than the proud, cold, and perfectly mannered gentleman, in whose breast the true man has become congealed to a law-abiding citizen. Dostoeffsky's "true men" have struggled, and have thereby acquired reverence for suffering: consequently, the ultimate terrestrial mysteries are laid bare to them. One who has suffered becomes a brother through sympathetic understanding; and none of Dostoeffsky's characters knows what it is to be shocked; for each only looks at the inner being, at the brother in his neighbour. They possess that sublime faculty which Dostoeffsky tells us is peculiar to the Russian, namely, the incapacity to hate for any length of time; having this, they likewise possess an inexhaustible faculty for understanding all things terrestrial. Agreed, they often quarrel and wrangle with one another; frequently they even torture one another; this is because they are ashamed of their love, because they consider their humility a sign of weakness, and have as yet no inkling that these qualities constitute the most formidable power man has at his disposal. Yet the inner voice informs them of the truth. In the very act of hurling invectives at one another and confronting each other as foes, the eyes of the inner man are looking forth comprehendingly, and his lips are meeting those of his opponent in a fraternal kiss. For the naked and everlasting man in each of them has recognized his peer in his fellow-disputant; and this mystery of universal reconciliation in brotherly identification, this orphic song of the spirit, accounts for the lyrical outbursts we hear ever and anon amid the gloomy music of Dostoeffsky's novels.

REALISM AND FANTASY

How can I find anything more fantastic than reality?

DOSTOEFFSKY

TRUTH, the immediate reality of their own circumscribed existence, is what Dostoeffsky's characters are in search of: truth, the immediate actuality of the All, is likewise the aim of Dostoeffsky, the artist. He is a realist, and is logical in his realism, carrying his argument to its final conclusion, in a remote region where forms become so strangely similar to their reflexions and their opposites that, for those who are used to contemplating everyday things, these realities appear fantastic. "I love realism even up to the point where it merges into the fantastic," writes Dostoeffsky; "and, indeed, how can I find anything more fantastic, more unexpected, and, even, more improbable, than reality?" In fact, for Dostoeffsky as for no other artist to the same degree, truth takes its place, not behind, but side by side with probability. Truth lies beyond the vision of those who are uninformed as to psychological phenomena: just as to the untrained eye a drop of water will appear a translucent unity, whilst to the expert, looking at it through a microscope, it will be a manifold complexity, a cosmos containing myriads of infusoria; so, in a world where ordinary folk can see nothing but the obvious and the homogeneous, the artist, endowed with a higher realism, discerns hidden

truths which seem to conflict with the manifest verities.

It was Dostoeffsky's passion to discover these profounder truths which lie far beneath the surface of things—so deep, indeed, that they are adjacent to the core of existence. He wishes to contemplate man as a unity and at the same time as a complexity, as homogeneous and yet heterogeneous. Thus his imaginative and penetrating realism, endowed as it is with both the magnifying power of a microscope and the clarifying insight and understanding of the seer, is as wide as the poles asunder from what the French look upon as the first essential in realistic and naturalistic art. For though Dostoeffsky pushes his analyses farther and is more precise in his deductions than any who dub themselves "logical naturalists" (by which term they mean to imply that they pursue their analyses to the end, whereas Dostoeffsky, as I have already pointed out, having reached the end, goes beyond!), yet his psychology hails from a different sphere of the creative spirit. The exact naturalism of the Zola school is the child of science. The introspective psychology which characterizes it has been imported into literature from another sphere, and carries with it an inseparable aroma of diligent study and investigation. Flaubert, in the retort of his brain, distils two thousand books in the Bibliothèque Nationale in order to get atmosphere, or local colour, for his *Tentation de saint Antoine* or his *Salammbô*. Before Zola embarks upon the writing of a novel, he spends many months, notebook in hand, observing, scribbling, eavesdropping in the Bourse, or in factories and workshops, in order to collect models and materials for his tales. The reality portrayed is cold, obvious, foreseen. These authors observe things with the physical eye, with the deliberate and calculating scrutiny of a

photographer. They collect, and order, and mix, and distil, the discrete elements of life; they are the sober scientists of art, and cultivate a chemistry of integration and disintegration.

Dostoeffsky's methods of observation are indissolubly linked with the daimonic. Whilst for Zola and Flaubert art is a science, in Dostoeffsky's hands it becomes the black art; if the Frenchmen are savants, the Russian is a magician. He does not pursue the calling of an experimental chemist, but, rather, that of an alchemist; he does not study the astronomy but the astrology of the mind. He is no self-possessed investigator; but, confirmed dreamer that he is, he gazes hallucinated into the immensity of life, his condition bordering upon the anguish of a nightmare. Nevertheless, owing to the range and flexibility of his visual powers, his cursory observations are far more complete than the systematic studies of those others. He does not collect materials, and yet he has everything he needs. Though he makes no elaborate calculations, his results are infallible. His seer's insight guides him to a diagnosis; and without having had to finger a pulse, he is able to discern the mysterious cause of the malady. His knowledge is spun from the gossamer of dreams; his art is woven on a magic loom. He cuts through the rind of life, and sucks the sweet, refreshing juice from out its pulp. The master-gift of imaginative insight, of empathy, enables him to excel all other realists in the truthfulness of his reality. Faust redivivus, at the most elusive sign, he grasps the world. A fleeting glance, and he has mastered every detail of the picture.

But here is another point in which he contrasts with the French realists. He never troubles his readers with minutiæ, and yet without them he conveys the most vivid of

images. Let us call to mind the great figures he has created: Raskolnikoff, Alyosha and Fedor Karamazoff, Myshkin, all those men who seem to us so actual and alive. Where has he ever given us a detailed portrait of them? Three strokes of the brush suggest their contours; a distinctive word depicts their personality; a few simple prases make plain their features. Age, calling, status, clothing, the colour of their hair, their physiognomies, everything that might seem of importance for the conveyance of personality, he gives us in the most abbreviated shorthand. And yet, how deeply each one of these figures is graven in our thoughts. Compare this inspired realism with the precise portraits drawn by the "logical naturalists." Zola, ere he started writing, drew up a memorandum containing the most finical details concerning the life and antecedents of those who were to pass the threshold of his novels. We can peruse these extraordinary documents today. He gives us every inch of the stature, counts the number of teeth, enumerates the warts on the cheeks, strokes the beard to learn whether the hair be harsh or silky, feels the nails, knows the quality of the voice and the way of breathing; he follows up the family tree to learn the good and the bad inheritance of his characters; goes to the bank to inform himself regarding their income and expenditure. Indeed he weighs and measures everything that lends itself to concrete manipulation. Yet as soon as the figure begins to move upon the stage of his writings, its unity is destroyed, its artificial cohesion dissolves. Its spiritual homogeneity proves fortuitous; its professed reality is unreal; and we never get the illusion that we are looking at a living human creature.

This is the essential error of that kind of art. The writ-

ers of the French realist school provide at the outset of their books an exact depiction of their characters in repose, in a state of spiritual lethargy. These portraits have, therefore, no more vitality than a death-mask. We are shown, not the vigorous movement of life, but the stasis of the last sleep. Where these realists stop, there the great naturalist, Dostoeffsky, begins. His characters do not come to life until they are excited, are filled with passion, have to face a tense moment. Whereas those other authors endeavour to convey an impression of the spiritual by describing the bodily attributes, Dostoeffsky builds up the body by way of the soul. Not until the passions distort or illumine the features of his characters, not until their eyes are dimmed with tears, not until the mask of respectable calm and spiritual frigidity has fallen from them, do his portraits come to life. Dostoeffsky, the seer, does not settle down to the task of moulding his figures until they of themselves begin to glow.

There is nothing casual about Dostoeffsky's seemingly vague beginnings. We pass through the doorway of his novels as if we were entering a darkened room. Only outlines are visible, only the whisper of voices can be heard, we know not who is present or who is speaking. Gradually, however, the eye grows accustomed to the obscurity; shapes appear; as from the mysterious shadows of Rembrandt's early canvases, the figures emerge and are flooded with spiritual efflux. These shades must burn with passion ere they can tread into the light, their nerves must be on the stretch ere the vibrations can be heard. In Dostoeffsky's creations, "only around the soul does the body take shape; only around a passion, the picture." Not until they glow, not until they become strangely heated as in a fever, do we feel the power of his amazing realism; then only does he

set out on his magical hunt for details; then only does he scrutinize every gesture, digging out laughter from its burrow, following the perverted feelings into their lair, dogging each thought until he brings it to earth in the twilit realm of the unconscious. Every movement acquires plasticity under his hands, every idea becomes crystal clear; the further these souls are chased into the action of the drama, the mightier is their radiation from within and the more transparent do they become. The morbid, the hypnotic, the ecstatic, and the epileptic, are depicted with the precision of a clinical diagnosis, with the definite outline of a geometrical figure. He misses no nuance, be it of the most delicate; not the faintest oscillation escapes him. Precisely at the point where most artists hesitate, where their senses are dulled by the effulgence of a supra-terrestrial realm, where, dazzled, they close their eyes, Dostoeffsky's realism begins to feel at home. And when the limits of the possible are reached, when knowledge verges on madness, and when passion assumes the attributes of crime, then do we experience the unforgettable moments of his works. Let us recall the figure of Raskolnikoff: he is not graven in our minds as slouching along the street, or as a medical student of twenty-five, sitting in his room, or as a being possessed of these characteristics or those peculiarities; what we perceive is the dramatic instant when the passionate and erring youth, his hands trembling, cold drops of perspiration beading his brow, makes his way up the staircase of the house where he has murdered the old woman and her sister, and when, in an uncanny trance, vividly experiencing anew the hideous and agonizing sensation he had felt on the night of the crime, shuddering with satisfaction, he pulls the bell of his victim's flat, then again, then a third

time. We see Dmitri Karamazoff passing through the purgatorial fires of his trial, passionate and furious, madly thumping the table with his fist, as he protests: "I am not guilty of my father's blood!" Dostoeffsky's people take on bodily shape in such moments of tense excitement, at the climax of emotion. Just as Leonardo in his magnificent caricatures depicts the grotesque and abnormal physique, when the body transgresses the limits of the habitual, so does Dostoeffsky portray the souls of men in the moments when man inclines to overstep the bounds of the possible. Intermediate states, compromise, harmony, are hateful to him: solely by the extraordinary, the unexpected, the elemental, is his artistic passion stirred to the task of realist portrayal. He is an incomparable manipulator of the clay of the unusual, he is one of the finest anatomists of the overwrought and sickly soul.

What is the instrument which enables Dostoeffsky to penetrate to these depths of human nature? The spoken word! Goethe depicts by means of his visualizing faculty. He is—Wagner drew the finest distinction between these different means of expression—essentially an optical being, whereas Dostoeffsky is an aural being. He has to hear his people speak, to let us hear them speak, so that they may become palpably present to us. Merezhkoffsky, in his profound analysis of Russia's two greatest writers, is justified in saying that Tolstoy makes us hear because he has made us see, whereas Dostoeffsky makes us see because he has made us hear. So long as his men and women have not spoken, they remain shadowy beings. Speech is the dew which fecundates their souls. Like strange blossoms, they open out their hearts to us as they speak, showing us their colours, their pollen, and the seed in the pod. They are warmed into

life by discussion, are awakened from their torpor by speech; and it is only when they have been thus roused that Dostoeffsky cares to lavish his artistry upon them. He conjures words out of their souls, so that in the end he may hold their souls within his grasp. His psychological penetration is, when all's said and done, nothing but an uncommonly fine aural perception. In the literature of the whole world we find no more complete and plastic portrayal of men than in the words of Dostoeffsky. The manner in which the words are arranged in the sentence is symbolical, the structure of the language is characteristic: nothing is left to chance. Every disjointed syllable, every interrupted tone, is necessary on its own account. Every pause, every repetition, every breathing space, every stammer, is momentous; for always beneath the outward sounds of speech we hear the murmur of subterranean currents. The torrential impetus of the soul finds an outlet in words. The conversations in Dostoeffsky's works disclose, not only that which his characters say and desire to say, but likewise that which they would prefer to leave unrevealed. And the inspired realism of spiritual hearing informs every syllable with a mysterious power: whether the words are the incoherent ramblings of a drunkard, or fall from the ecstatic lips of an epileptic just before the seizure, or come from the lying mouth of a debauchee. From the reek of heated discourse, the soul aspires upward; and slowly out of the soul the body is formed. Hardly knowing how to account for what we see, above the fog of words, amid the hashish fumes of the narrative, the vision of the speaker arises and takes shape. What others achieve by diligently fitting in the pieces as in a mosaic, by colouring, by draughtsmanship, by conciseness, Dostoeffsky achieves by words. So soon as we

have heard them speak, we see his characters as plainly as in the vision of a dream. The author need not trouble to describe them, for we ourselves, hypnotized by their words, become visionaries.

One example will suffice to show what I mean. In *The Idiot,* the old general, a pathological liar, walks up and down with Prince Myshkin telling his reminiscences. He starts by lying, slips ever deeper into the quagmire of falsehood, and winds up by sticking in the bog altogether. He talks, and talks, and talks. His lies fly beyond all bounds, like those of the liar in Kryloff's fable.

Dostoeffsky gives us no line of personal description; yet from the general's words, from his hesitations, his splutterings, his nervous gabbling, as he walks to and fro by Myshkin's side, from the way he glances cautiously up at his companion to see whether what he says is raising a doubt, from the manner in which he comes to a halt in his stride hoping the prince will break in upon his discourse, from all this and much more besides, we form a detailed picture in our minds as to the kind of man we have to do with. I can see the sweat breaking out on his forehead, can see his face, so elated at the start, becoming more and more crumpled with anxiety, can see how he slinks back into himself like a guilty dog which fears a whipping; I can also see the prince, conscious of the inclination to prevaricate dormant within himself, and yet keeping the tendency well under control. Where, however, is this description to be found in the novel? Nowhere. Yet for me every line in the two men's faces is as plain as a pikestaff. Somewhere in all this speechifying must lurk the arcanum of the wizard who makes us see visions; maybe it lies in the modulations of the voice, or in the position of the words.

So full of witchery is this art of depiction, that even in translation we can still catch the essence of these people in their speech. For the entire character of Dostoeffsky's figures is condensed into the rhythm of their talk. This condensation is often achieved by some petty detail; a syllable will suffice. When we are told that old Fedor Karamazoff, having addressed an envelope to Grushenka, has added "for my little chicken," we cannot but see the face of the senile debauchee, see his bad teeth, and the saliva dribbling over the leering lips. Again, in *The House of the Dead*, we are given the picture of a sadistic officer who watches a convict being flogged, and keeps on shouting to the man who plies the scourge: "Harder, harder!" In this one word is conveyed to us the whole character of the onlooker. We picture him sobbing with brutal eagerness, his eyes aflame, his face red, gasping for breath as he gives way to his evil passion.

These tiny realistic details move us to the soul, and conjure us into an unfamiliar world; they constitute Dostoeffsky's most carefully chosen means for expressing his art, and are at the same time the greatest triumph of intuitive realism over systematic naturalism. He is not spendthrift of such details; he introduces one where others would introduce a hundred; he saves them up for special occasions and surprises us with the use of them just at the moment of highest ecstasy when they are least expected. With unfaltering hand he pours the gall of earthliness into the chalice of ecstasy; for him, truth and reality consist in being anti-romantic and anti-sentimental. Nor must we forget that Dostoeffsky is not only the captive of his own duality, but also its missionary. In art as in life he desires to bring extremes together, to wed the most horrible, naked, cold, and

foul reality with the noblest and sublimest dreams. He wishes us to find the divine in all things earthly; to discover in reality, fantasy; in sublimity, vulgarity; in transcendental spirit, the bitter salt of this world; and he wants us to experience these contrasted states and emotions simultaneously. We are to enjoy in two conflicting ways, just as he feels in two conflicting ways; there is to be neither harmony nor compromise. Everywhere in his works we find these dismemberings of the emotions, diabolic details, which shatter the sublimest situations, and mercilessly display the banality underlying the holiest things of life. I will make my point clear by recalling a passage from *The Idiot*. Rogozhin has killed Nastasya Filipovna; he meets Myshkin in the street, touches the prince's elbow, calls him: Brother. They speak in whispers. They make their way to the house, Myshkin atremble with foreboding. A premonition of something great and solemn overwhelms us as the young men go up the stairs to Rogozhin's rooms. The lifelong foes, brethren in feeling, enter the study. Nastasya Filipovna lies dead on the bed. A conviction that these two men are about to have a heart-to-heart talk over the body of the woman who has kept them apart surges up within the reader's consciousness. At last the talk begins, and the heavens are blotted out by the naked, brutal, all-consuming earthliness and devilishness of the facts. Rogozhin wonders whether the body will smell; he explains that he has covered it with American oilcloth, good American oilcloth, has pulled the sheet over it, and has bought four jars of deodorant.

Gruesome details of this sort seem to me to have a sadistic and satanistic flavour, for the realism they express is more than mere technical artistry, it partakes of the nature

of metaphysical revenge; it is, so to say, a vent for secret voluptuousness, and an outlet for a sardonic sense of disillusionment. Four jars. The mathematical precision of the statement! American oilcloth. These are deliberately introduced to bring discord into the spiritual harmony; they are grisly revolts against the unity of the emotions. Truth exceeds its own truthfulness, becoming vicious and torturing; and the grim descent from the heavens into the foul chasm of reality would make those books intolerable were it not for the soaring contrasts of spiritual ecstasy he is able to juxtapose.

From a "society" standpoint, Dostoeffsky's is a worm-eaten cosmos, in close proximity to the cesspools of life, within the dreariest spheres of poverty and wretchedness. Fierce opponent of all that savours of romanticism or sentimentality, he deliberately sets the scene of his drama amid the banalities of existence. Dirty pothouses, stinking of stale beer and spirits; stuffy rooms, "narrow as coffins," separated by no more than a wooden partition; seldom does he lead us into drawing-rooms, hotels, palaces, or comfortable offices. It is of set purpose that, outwardly, his characters are "uninteresting"; he gives us consumptive women, down-at-heel students, ne'er-do-wells, spendthrifts, idlers; but those who cut a figure in society are ignored. And it is amid the dreary monotony of everyday happenings that he depicts the greatest tragedies of the epoch. Fantastically enough, the magnificent arises out of the paltry; and it is this contrast between exterior jejuneness and spiritual intoxication, between exiguous surroundings and amplitude in the realm of the heart's emotions, that imparts so magical an atmosphere to his world. Befuddled topers in a drinking booth prophesy the advent of the Third King-

dom; the saintly Alyosha tells the profoundest of legends, what time a wench sits upon his knee; in brothels and gambling haunts, the apostolates of good arise; and the grandest scene in *Crime and Punishment*, the one in which Raskolnikoff, the murderer, drops to the ground to kiss Sonia's foot, bowing down before all the sufferings of humanity, takes place, where? In the barnlike room of a harlot who has hired this grotesque lodging from the stuttering tailor Kapernaumoff.

Alternating streams of cold or hot, hot or cold (but never lukewarm), course through the channels of the passionate life he creates; we seem to be living in the world of the Apocalypse. Side by side, in a frenzy of contrasts, are disclosed the sublime and the ridiculous; and we are hunted from unrest to unrest, till our emotions are jangled. Dostoeffsky never allows us a moment's respite; we are never permitted to enjoy the luxury of quiet reading; our breathing is not to be orderly and rhythmical, but jerky and spasmodic as if electric shocks were being administered; we are goaded on from page to page, growing hotter, more uneasy, more devoured by curiosity. So long as we are in this creator's power, we assume certain attributes of the author. Being himself a creature cloven in twain, a man for ever crucified upon the cross of duality, he infuses his characters with the same duplexity and destroys the unity of feeling in his readers likewise.

The peculiar quality of his exposition resides in this power, and it would be detrimental to his genius to describe it as his "technique." That is essentially a craftsman's expression. Dostoeffsky's art flows out from the core of his personality, from the primal cleavage in his emotional make-up. His world is composed of truth and mystery;

but at the same time it is a prophetic recognition of reality, knowledge, and magic. The most incomprehensible appears comprehensible, the most comprehensible seems beyond our ken. If the problems he confronts us with verge on the limits of the possible, still they never attain the region of the utterly formless. His characters remain real in this sense—that they always have their roots firmly struck into the soil of Mother Earth, that they never become mere shadows. The creatures Dostoeffsky portrays are known by him to the innermost fibres of their being. He fathoms their dreams, rummages among their passions, sifts their drunkenness. Not an iota of their spiritual substance eludes him; nor does their least thought escape his notice. Link by link, he forges his psychological chain upon the limbs of the captives of his art. He never commits a psychological error; nor is there any entanglement which his unerring logic cannot unravel. A clash with the inner truth is unknown to him. What an amazing edifice his art and vision conjure up! The dialectical dispute between Porfiry Petrovich and Raskolnikoff, the scientific upbuilding of crime, the tortuous logic of the Karamazoff family; all this is an architectonic of the spirit, unparalleled, flawless as mathematics, as full of reverberations as music, combining the highest powers of the mind with the seerlike insight of the soul, so as to attain to a profounder truth, to verities more far-reaching than have ever yet been vouchsafed to man.

Yet why, in spite of such an essentially complete portrayal of the truth, do Dostoeffsky's works, do these fundamentally earthly and at the same time unearthly works, give us the feeling that we are looking into a world that lies outside our own, above and beyond the world we

know? Why, as we enter into this world, do we feel shaken to the soul, and, at the same time, feel that it is a world we are strangers to? Why do we feel as if all his novels were lit by artificial light, and as if we had been spirited into a realm filled with hallucinations and dreams? Why do his external realities appear to us rather as somnambulistic effects than as manifestations of reality? Why, despite the heated, nay the over-heated, condition of the atmosphere, do we never feel the fruitful warmth of the sun? Why do we never see the sun, but only a kind of chill aurora suffusing the skies? Why do these truest of true presentations of life seem somehow or other as if they had nothing to do with life itself, with life as we know it?

Let me try to answer. Dostoeffsky's works will bear comparison with all that is most imperishable and exalted in the world's literature. The tragedy of the Karamazoffs is no whit less imposing than the tragedy of Orestes, than the Homeric epics, or the splendid creations of Goethe. These others are, perhaps, simpler, more unpretentious, less rich in knowledge, and of smaller import for the future than are Dostoeffsky's. On the other hand they are gentler, and bring more balsam to the soul. They act as liberators of the feelings; whereas Dostoeffsky's give nothing but knowledge. I think those other tragedies and epics owe much of their charm to the fact that they are not exclusively human in scope, but are celestial as well. They are set in a framework of heavenly radiance, there is a breath of flowery meadows about them, a glimpse of stars in the skies, where the feelings can spread wings to fly freely and unafraid. In the midst of the Homeric combats, during the bloodiest of frays, we are granted the boon of a few lines of description that waft a fresh breeze of salt-laden wind

from the sea to our lips; the silvery sheen of the Grecian landscapes floods the battleground with light, and emotionally we realize that the most shattering of these human fights is no more than a puny revolt against the eternal order of things. One heaves a sigh of relief, as if one were delivered from the sadness of this mortal coil. Even Faust has his Easter Sunday, is able to throw off his personal sorrow, consigning it to nature's deeps; he tosses his delight into the springtime of the world. In all these works we are led to the bosom of nature, there to find release from the world of men. But Dostoeffsky fails to provide any such outlet. The cosmos he shows us is not the all-embracing universe, but the narrower realm where man lives and suffers. Dostoeffsky is deaf to music, blind to pictures, dumb before a landscape: he is made to pay for his astounding knowledge of human psychology by a total indifference to nature and to art. And everything that is purely human is veiled in a mist of inaccessibility. For him, God dwells exclusively in the soul; there is no god in things. Dostoeffsky lacks the precious kernel of pantheism which makes both German and Hellenic literature so happy and so liberating. The scene for all his works is set in stuffy rooms, in miry streets, in reeking taverns; they are pervaded by a human, all-too-human atmosphere; no sweet winds sweep across to ventilate and refresh; we are never reminded of the coming and going of the seasons. Try to recall if in any of his great works, whether in *Crime and Punishment*, or in *The Idiot*, or in *The Brothers Karamazoff*, or in *A Raw Youth*, we are given an idea of the time of year when or the kind of landscape amid which the action takes place. During summer? Or spring? Or autumn? Maybe the fact is mentioned. But we are not made to feel it as a concrete reality. The action

takes place in the dark recesses of the heart, which are from time to time illuminated by a lightning-flash of perception; it takes place within the airless spaces of the brain; it lacks stars and blossoms; it is void of both stillness and silence. The air is always heavy with the effluvium of great cities. Nowhere can we find rest from the all-pervading humanity these works portray, no blissful relaxation such as is granted to man when, forgetful of himself and his troubles, he turns his attention to the non-sentient and passionless spheres without. This is the seamy side of Dostoeffsky's works. His figures emerge from a grey background of misery and tenebrous vacuity; they do not stand forth freely and clearly in the world of things, but for ever remain in an eternity of pure feeling. His sphere is a spiritual world, it is not nature; his universe is mankind, mankind alone.

Even the human beings he depicts, though each individual is so authentic, so flawless in respect of logical organization, are in their totality unreal; they are such stuff as dreams are made of, and they stalk through the boundless spaces as if they were no more than shades. Yet, despite the sense of unreality thus conveyed, these figures have a higher truth that is all their own. They are true because their creator's psychological acumen is unerring; they are unreal, because they are not compounded of flesh and blood but of thoughts and feelings. They never become tangible. On the many thousand pages of his works, how seldom does Dostoeffsky tell us that his characters sit down, or that they eat and drink; always they are in the act of feeling, or speaking, or fighting. They neither sleep—though they often seem to move in a making dream—nor seek repose; they are always in a fever, always thinking. They are never

vegetative, plantlike, or, like the animals, enjoying a moment of torpor; always they are restless, excited, tense; always they are awake. Awake, exaggeratedly awake. Constantly at the highest point of existence. All of them, like their creator, are equipped with powers of perspicacious observation; they are every one of them seers, telepathic, and subject to hallucinations; they are all endowed with pythian or prophetic faculties; and every one of them is a psychologist to his finger-tips.

In ordinary life most men are in conflict one with another and with fate, because they do not understand, because they are endowed with no more than an earthly comprehension. Shakespeare, also a great psychologist, bases half his tragedies upon this innate lack of penetration, upon this fundamental obtuseness, which severs us so hopelessly one from another. Lear mistrusts his daughter Cordelia because he fails to realize the quality of her generosity and the magnitude of the love hidden behind her reserve; Othello takes Iago as his confidant; Cæsar loves Brutus, who is to be his assassin; all are true to their earthly inheritance, all are prey to delusion. In Shakespeare's plays, as in real life, misunderstanding is the main cause of tragedy, is the ultimate source of conflict. But Dostoeffsky's characters know too much ever to succumb to misunderstanding. They have no veils for one another; they understand one another, can penetrate into one another's depths, can read one another's thoughts, and foresee one another's words. They are on the scent of the quarry almost before the hunt is up; they never miss the trail, are never taken unawares; each individual soul runs the other's meaning to earth with mysterious precision. The unconscious and the subconscious are hypertrophied. All these figures are en-

dowed with second sight, for Dostoeffsky has transferred to them his own mysterious faculties of perception.

Let me give an illustration. Nastasya Filipovna is murdered by Rogozhin. She knows that she belongs to him from the first moment she sets eyes on him; she shuns him because of this knowledge; she returns to him because she longs for her destiny to be fulfilled. Months beforehand, she makes acquaintance with the knife that is to pierce her breast. Rogozhin, too, knows this same knife; Myshkin likewise. The prince's lips tremble when, one day, while he is talking to Rogozhin, the latter plays with the knife. We have the same kind of foreknowledge of Fedor Karamazoff's end. Father Zosima falls on his knees because he anticipates the crime which is to take place; even the shallow and cunning fool Rakitin can read the portents heralding the deed. Alyosha kisses his father's shoulder on bidding farewell; his feelings warn him that he will see the old man alive no more. Ivan goes off to Chermashnya that he may avoid witnessing the crime. Smerdyakoff, the mean, contemptible rascal, knows what is coming. Indeed they all have a premonition of the hour when and the place where the fateful deed is to be done. All are prophets, all have foreknowledge, all are gifted with second sight.

For the artist, truth always has two aspects, one superficial and one profound; and in Dostoeffsky's case the second, the profounder, aspect was psychological. Although he possessed a deeper knowledge of men's souls than any before him, yet Shakespeare had a profounder acquaintance with mankind. The English dramatist recognized the complexity of existence, saw how the trivial and the commonplace are continually interlinked with the sublime. But Dostoeffsky sent all his creations questing for the infinite.

Shakespeare knew the world in the flesh; Dostoeffsky knew it in the spirit. The latter's world is, perhaps, the most perfect hallucination of the world, a deeper and more prophetic dream, far transcending reality, for it is a reality which has soared away into the realm of fantasy. This super-realist, this transgressor of every boundary, never portrayed the actual; what he did was to push the real into spheres beyond the real.

Thus we see that the world of Dostoeffsky's artistic creation is limned from the viewpoint of the spirit; it is a world of the inner life; it is redeemed from within. This kind of art, the profoundest known to mankind, has no precedent in the field of letters, either in Russia or elsewhere. But though actual forerunners are lacking, it has kindred in the art of earlier times. In Greek tragedy, for instance, there is an undercurrent of convulsive misery, an excessive amount of suffering among the men who twist and turn in the hands of an implacable destiny; in Michelangelo there is a mystical, stony, insoluble sadness of spirit. But among the artists of all the ages it is to Rembrandt that Dostoeffsky bears the most unmistakable resemblance. Both these men endured a life of toil and privation; both of them were despised and rejected; and both, through penury, were forced to taste the lees of human misery. Both experienced the relentless struggle between light and darkness, thus learning the creative implications lying ambushed in contrasts, and becoming aware that no beauty can excel that of the saintliness which is the expression of a life of deprivation. Dostoeffsky's holy ones are Russian peasants, criminals, gamblers; Rembrandt finds the models for his biblical personages among the riff-raff of the ports: both feel that in the basest forms of life a new and mys-

terious loveliness is concealed; both find their Christ among the dregs of humanity. Both recognize the constant interplay of earthly forces, of light and darkness; they know that these actions and reactions are no less vigorously at work in the sphere of terrestrial life than in the celestial sphere where the spirit has shaken off earthly trappings; and that, in body and in spirit alike, all that pertains to light is wrung from the ultimate darkness of life itself. The deeper we penetrate into Rembrandt's pictures or into Dostoeffsky's books, the easier it becomes to solve the riddle of earthly and of spiritual forms, the answer to which is: universal humanity. And where, at first, we discern only shadowy shapes, and see no more than a pale reflexion of reality, after a while we perceive, with the informed pleasure of him who has won his way to the light, the holy sheen which, like a martyr's crown, forms an aureole around life's last things.

ARCHITECTURE AND PASSION

Que celui aime peu, qui aime la mesure!
LA BOËTIE

"You drive everything till it becomes a passion," says Nastasya Filipovna; and her dictum strikes at Dostoeffsky's heart no less accurately than it strikes at the heart of all his characters. He can only approach the phenomena of existence in passionate mood; and his intensest passion is reserved for the thing he loves above all else: art. It goes without saying that the creative process, the artistic endeavour, so far as Dostoeffsky is concerned, does not forward smoothly, that it is not a coolly calculated one. Dostoeffsky writes in a fever, just as he lives and thinks in a fever. He has the nervous and hasty calligraphy of the ardent type of man, and when he sets pen to paper the words flow forth like chains of tiny beads; yet in his wrist, the while, his pulse is beating at redoubled speed. The author's nerves twitch convulsively; for him creation is an ecstasy, a martyrdom, a delight and a disruption, an agonizing voluptuousness and a voluptuous agony, an everlasting spasm, a constantly recurring eruption of his volcanic nature. *Poor Folk*, which he composed at the age of twenty-four, was written "with tears"; ever after, each of his books is born out of a crisis, an illness. "I am working feverishly, in an atmosphere of torment and worry. If I strain at my work I become physically a wreck." In actual fact his epileptic fits, with their febrile and devastating rhythm,

with their dark and stupefying repressions, make themselves felt in the remotest ramifications of his works. He creates with every force in his being, in a state of hysterical frenzy. Even the less important of his writings, his journalistic essays, have passed through the furnace of his passion. He never draws free-hand, never works with the manipulative dexterity and insouciance of a good technician; he enters in the action of the drama with his nerves tingling, and thus he suffers acutely with his characters and on their behalf. All his works are explosive, because of the electrical tension they embody, like that heralding a thunderstorm. He cannot depict without being part of the depiction, and of Dostoeffsky it might be said as Stendhal says of himself (in the person of Henri Brulard): "Quand il était sans émotion, il était sans esprit." When Dostoeffsky failed to be passionate, he failed also as a creative artist.

But, in the realm of art, passion may be as destructive as it is creative. It creates no more than the chaos of forces, whose eternal forms have to be moulded by the lucid mind. All art requires unrest as a spur to creation; and yet no less important are repose, reflection, consideration, if the work is to be perfected. Dostoeffsky's mind, which cut clean like a diamond through glass into the realm of reality, recognized the need for an atmosphere of crystalline coldness around a work of art. He worshipped a really fine architectonic, he would gladly have constructed a beautifully ordered scheme of the universe. But as soon as he began to build, his feelings ran away with him. The cleavage between what the brain wanted and what the heart made him do is only too apparent in his work, and might be described as the antagonism between architectonic and passion. In vain does Dostoeffsky, the artist, try to be objective, to re-

main on the outside of things, to tell a plain story, to describe people, to be an unbiased recorder of events, an analyst of the emotions. Irresistibly he is forced to suffer and to sympathize with the events in the world of his creation. There is always a suggestion of the primal chaos in Dostoeffsky's completed works; he never achieves harmony. Ivan Karamazoff, the betrayer of his creator's most intimate thoughts, exclaims: "I hate harmony." No peace is ever to be signed between form and desire, no compromise, only—and this is the price he has to pay for the duality of his nature, a duality which permeates everything he does, suffusing it from the cool husk into its most glowing core—an unremitting struggle between outward and inward reality. The cleavage in his own temperament is reflected in the cleavage between the architecture of his work and the passionate content.

In his novels, Dostoeffsky never achieves the "epic vein," as it is called; that power of calmly recounting tremendous events, that great secret handed down from master to master throughout the ages, and possessed by all great writers from Homer to Gottfried Keller and Tolstoy. His world is born of passion; and only under the urge of passion can it be properly appreciated. We are never allowed to hear those gentle strains which lull to blessed tranquillity; we cannot feel sure that the storm and stress are over, cannot be certain that we have sailed safely into port, and are now in a position to contemplate from a distance, secure and unmolested, the turmoil of winds and waves. We are surrounded by, cabined within, the tragedy, and may not escape. The crises his characters traverse rage like a sickness in our own blood, and the problems he raises consume us like a fire. He plunges us into the seething at-

mosphere of his novels, takes us to the vertiginous heights overlooking the abysses of the soul, and leaves us breathless and dizzy. When our pulses beat with the same tumultuousness as his own, and our passions have assumed the impetus of his, then, and not till then, do his works belong to us and do we become an integral part of them. Dostoeffsky will tolerate none but tense beings as participators in his kingdom. The easy-going flâneur among books, the stroller who is content to amble along the beaten track where all the problems have been solved, must renounce the attempt to read Dostoeffsky; for only when our hearts are aflame with passion can we gain admittance to his realm.

Dostoeffsky's relationship to his reader is a discord; is full of dangerous, gruesome, voluptuous instincts. It is a passionate relationship, such as exists between man and wife; not, as with other authors, a companionship, full of friendliness and trust. Dickens and Gottfried Keller, his contemporaries, lure their readers persuasively into their world; they bespeak them kindly, gently initiating them into the story, and tickling their curiosity and their imaginative faculties. But Dostoeffsky is not content with having our interest; he wants the whole of us, body and soul. He charges his atmosphere with electricity, and finds subtle means to stimulate us. A hypnosis settles down on us, so that we surrender our will to his. He confuses our senses with unending speeches, enticing us into the innermost sanctuary by hints and mysterious allusions. Nor does he readily tolerate a surrender; he extends the martyrdom of preparation by slowly transfusing knowledge into our veins. Almost imperceptibly at first, restlessness sets in; but still he puts off the moment of initiation, introducing

fresh figures and pictures for our consideration. Like a man well versed in the art of love, he postpones the moment of our compliance with a devilish strength of will, thereby enhancing a millionfold the state of tension. Inevitably we derive the impression that an overwhelming tragedy is imminent; a flash of awesome foreboding rips the heavens of our souls. How long we are kept in suspense in *Crime and Punishment* before we are given to understand that all the apparently senseless descriptions of spiritual states are in reality a preparation for the double murder perpetrated by Raskolnikoff! And yet from the outset we have a premonition how events will unroll.

Dostoeffsky takes delight in the finesse of postponement; one obscure intimation here, another there, act as pinpricks in the tender skin of sensibility. Before the great scenes are allowed to take place, he gives us page after page full of vague yet significant, tedious yet stimulating expectation, until a sensitive reader is in a condition of spiritual fever and physical torment. Even pleasurable excitement is accentuated, by this fanatic of contrasts, till it develops into pain; and not until, in the overheated furnace of the breast, emotions are at boiling-point and the chest walls threaten to burst, does he bring his hammer down on our hearts; and we reach that moment of exaltation when, with a terrible release like the discharge of a thunder-cloud, our strained nerves are unstretched. Not until the tension has reached breaking-point does Dostoeffsky lift the veil, and bathe the exacerbated emotions in a gentle, tear-dimmed sensation.

Dostoeffsky's grip upon his reader is full of enmity, of sensuousness, and of passionate subtlety. He does not overcome us in open combat, but, like an assassin who spends

hours tracking down his victim, he suddenly pierces us to the heart. It is because he cannot stand aloof and contemplate the narrative unmoved, because he is himself caught up in the rush of his characters' emotions, that we deny him the title of epic writer. His technique is eruptive; he does not patiently construct the roadway leading into his work, removing the earth, shovel by shovel; but he mines from within, using the most concentrated energy, that he may blow the world to fragments, and simultaneously discharge his own stresses. His preparations are made underground, with conspiratorial art; and the result invariably takes the reader by surprise. One may have a presentiment that a catastrophe is in the air, but one is never sure; it is impossible to foresee in which of his characters the mine is being laid, or at what hour and in what circumstances the fuse is to be fired. From each of the characters a shaft runs down into the focal point of the occurrence; each individual is loaded with the inflammable material. The identity of him who is to ignite the fuse is kept from us with unexampled skill. For instance, among all those whose minds are poisoned with the thought of doing away with Fedor Karamazoff, no sign is vouchsafed as to who is the chosen instrument for the murder. Dostoeffsky, though he allows us to surmise as much as we like, never betrays his own secrets. One is aware only of fate, burrowing like a mole beneath the surface of life; one feels that a mine is laid just beneath one's heart; one faints with suspense. Then, in a tiny second of time, a streak of lightning flashes across the sultry sky; the tension is snapped.

And to lead up to this second, to this extraordinarily condensed situation, Dostoeffsky needs an unprecedentedly lengthy and abundant preliminary presentation. Such con-

centrated states, such intensity, can only be achieved through a monumental form of art, an art that has something of primitive grandeur about it, an art which has the quality of a saga. Breadth in this case is not garrulousness, but architecture. Just as the pyramids required gigantic foundations, so Dostoeffsky, in order to achieve the pinnacles of his building, needs the massive dimensions of his novels. Indeed, his novels roll on their way like the Volga or the Dnieper, those mighty streams of his homeland. They have something of the river about them, these slowly moving stories, gathering into their main current the countless tributary rivulets of life. They sweep away in their hundreds of pages many a political rock and polemical stone as their waters overflow the banks of an art which would if it could keep them in their channels. Often, when inspiration is lacking, they broaden out into shallow pools wherein the water seems about to drain away into the sand. Their flow becomes sluggish, they trickle laboriously in curves and through swamps; they stagnate for hours in morasses of talk; until at last the current narrows, and the flow of the story, having renewed its impetus, swings passionately forward again.

Then, as we approach the sea, infinitude, we are hurled into a veritable race of waters; the tale speeds along like the whirlwind, the pages fly, the tempo accelerates, carrying us towards the edge whence the roar of the waterfall assails our ears. The whole volume of waters is transformed of a sudden into a seething mass of foam, hurtling onward with inconceivable haste. As the story, like a river storming down a cataract, hurries to its final catharsis, so the reader willy-nilly turns the pages quicker and quicker, until he is flung into the abyss of the accomplished fact and

his emotional tension is shattered among the boulders.

This torrential rush of feeling comes at the close of every one of Dostoeffsky's novels, conceived as they are on the grand scale. During the climax, the whole of life is condensed into a unit; the commotion we experience is both torturing and vertiginous; it is as if we were standing on the top of a high tower and looking down into our own depths; a divine madness seems to possess us, and we have the bliss of savouring beforehand the sensation of precipitating ourselves to our death. Maybe all novels are written with this white-hot moment in view. Dostoeffsky has given us twenty or thirty tremendous situations in the course of his works, and each attains to such a degree of vehemence and is so pregnant with passion that, not only are we dumbfounded at the first reading, but even at the fourth or fifth it is as if a flaming arrow were piercing us to the heart. At such moments all the personalities of the book seem to be congregated into one room, and each of them is animated by the full vigour of his own arbitrary will. All the roads and streams and forces are, by some inexorable magic, gathered together to find relief in a single action, in a single countenance, in a single word. Let us recall the moment in *The Possessed* when Shatoff strikes Stavrogin, and the "sodden thud" of the blow shatters the web of the mystery; or that scene in *The Idiot* when Nastasya Filipovna throws the hundred thousand roubles into the fire; or the confession scenes in *Crime* and *Punishment* and in *The Brothers Karamazoff*. At these moments (the highest moments in Dostoeffsky's art, when what happens is no longer taking place in the world of matter but appertains to the elemental forms of being), architecture and passion are wedded for life. Only at the instant of rapture, that all-too-

short instant in the artist's life, does Dostoeffsky become a unified man. At length the artist has triumphed over the mere human being. Not until we contemplate the work in retrospect do we realize how marvellously each step in the ascent has been calculated; with what intimate knowledge men and circumstances are made to supplement one another and set one another off; how the thousand and one equations are reduced to a common standard, the ultimate unit of feeling. The essence of Dostoeffsky's art is this power of leading up to such concentrated crises wherein the electrical tensions of feeling are condensed and towards which the lightning discharges of fate are infallibly attracted.

Need we further insist upon the origin of this unique art form? Need we repeat that it is merely the re-creation in the artistic field of the occurrences taking place within the psyche of the author himself? Never has the suffering of an artist been put to better use; never before has it culminated in a climax so convincing that the reader loses all sense of time and place. Long though these books are, they are miracles of emotional condensation. Let me illustrate the paradox. In the first three hundred odd pages of *The Idiot* we are confronted with a maelstrom of destinies; a chaos of souls flies by us; a multitude of people are brought to life before our very eyes. We have strolled along the streets with them, have sat in houses in their company. Then, suddenly, we become aware that the innumerable happenings we have been witnessing have all taken place in little more than twelve hours, between forenoon and midnight. The events wherein the Karamazoffs act out their fate occupy only a few days in time; the Raskolnikoff tragedy fulfils itself in a week. Masterpieces of condensa-

tion, rarely met with among epic writings, and very rarely achieved even in life itself! Alone among the tragedies of classical antiquity does the story of Œdipus attain a similar condensation, for there, between noon and evening, a whole lifetime and a previous generation are compressed; we experience the descent from the heights into the depths and the ascent to the heights again, the merciless see-saw of chance and likewise the purifying power of a spiritual storm. In the great moments of Dostoeffsky's creation, his novels take on the shape of drama, and he then excels as a writer of tragedy. The close of the Karamazoff tragedy is soul of the Greek tragedy's soul, flesh of Shakespeare's flesh. The titan stands before us in them all, naked, defenceless, puny, beneath the tragic skies of destiny.

At the moment of catastrophe, these novels of Dostoeffsky's lose their character as tales. They throw off the vestments of mere story-telling, and become dialogue, white-hot dialogue. The big scenes are pure dialogue, they could be transferred just as they are on to the stage, so dramatically are they conceived and carried out. Indeed, the novelist has turned playwright.

Nor were actor managers slow to grasp this truth; so that very soon there were acting versions of Raskolnikoff, the Idiot, and the Karamazoffs. But hardly did they see the footlights, when it became manifest how impossible it was to represent such characters from without, to drag them from their proper sphere, out of the world of the spirit. Like stricken trees, stripped of bark and leaves, lifeless, do these figures appear on the boards compared with their electrifying vitality in the world to which they properly belong. They depend so greatly for their powers of presentation upon suggestion and premonition and chiaroscuro.

Dostoeffsky's psychology cannot be forced into the limelight; those who would try to simplify it, or "work it up anew," have contumely for their reward. There are strange contacts, undercurrents, and shades of meaning, in this subterranean world; and all of them elude our grasp. He does not construct his figures with visible material, but with thousands upon thousands of hints; nothing more delicate is known in the realm of literature than the gossamer warp and woof of his weaving. Try, for example, to read one of these novels in the abridged French version. Outwardly nothing seems to be lacking. Events roll briskly on their course, as in a film; the figures appear more agile than in the original, they are more firmly knit; even, perhaps, more passionate. And yet, somehow, they are impoverished, their souls lack that strangely iridescent sheen, the atmosphere has been deprived of its electric spark, the sultry tension whose discharge brings so agreeable a sense of relief is not there. Something has been destroyed which cannot be replaced; the magic circle has been broken. These abridgments and attempts at dramatization make manifest the meaning of Dostoeffsky's breadth of treatment, and the object of his apparent garrulousness. For the tiny, ephemeral, haphazard hints, which at the time appear trivial and superfluous details, have their reverberation many hundred pages farther on in the book. Beneath the surface of the tale there is a mysterious switchboard; a network of live wires carrying the messages far and wide, and creating strange repercussions. He has invented a special shorthand of the soul, minute physical and psychical signs, whose meaning becomes clear to us only at a third or a fourth reading. Where else do we find so perfected a nervous system in the art of story-telling, such a medley of

occurrences beneath the skeletal structure of events and under the superficial layers of the dialogue? And yet the word "system" is, perhaps, a misnomer. The psychological processes we are confronted with can only be compared with the seemingly spontaneous and yet inexplicable ordering of man himself. Whereas other great writers, and in especial Goethe, appear to take nature as their model rather than man, allowing events to develop organically like a plant and picturesquely like a landscape, Dostoeffsky's novels are like an encounter with an exceptionally profound and passionate human being. His works depict the archetypal man ranging the infinite, a being of nerves and incandescent flesh and brain, a being whose personality is cloven in twain, a creature who is wise and excitable and passionate. His works are as unsearchable and as unfathomable as is the soul within its bodily prison-house; and they are incomparable monuments of literary art.

They are incomparable! Our admiration of his artistry, of his spiritual mastery, transcends all bounds; and the more we immerse ourselves in his writings, the more overwhelmed are we by their almost incredible power and greatness. Yet this is not to say that every one of Dostoeffsky's novels is a perfect work of art. Indeed, they are far less perfect as works of art than are many others of much less intrinsic value, dealing with a smaller circle of interests and satisfied with more modest aims. The measureless may be able to reach the infinite, but the infinite cannot be copied. Much of the architectonic may become blurred by passion, and the building which has been conceived on the heroic scale may be spoiled by impatience in the execution. But Dostoeffsky's impatience leads back from the tragedy depicted by his art into the tragedy of his own life. As with

Balzac, so with Dostoeffsky, his impatience was due to poverty, not to levity; life made so many claims upon him that he had to write quickly and not trouble his head about perfection. We must never forget how these works came into being. The whole novel was already sold ere the author had completed the first chapter, so that he was always in a hurry to finish within contract time. He worked "like an old post-horse"; ever on the go, travelling from place to place; he lacked both time and opportunities for rest, and for putting the final polish on his work. Was not he the first to reproach himself? "If you could only see the conditions in which I have to work! You demand masterpieces from me; yet the bitterest need is always hurrying me along."

He envies Turgeneff and Tolstoy who can sit at home at ease, rounding off their periods amid the comforts of their own estates. Yet he is not by nature envious. As a man, he does not shun poverty; but the artist, abased to the rank of proletarian, rages against "landowner literature." He longs, with the longing of all true artists, for leisure and tranquillity wherein to perfect his work. No flaw in his writings is ignored by him; he knows that after he has had an epileptic fit the interest of the story slackens, that the taut integument of the work of art loses its elasticity, and that much indifferent matter is allowed to creep in. His friends and his wife often have to draw his attention to gross lapses, for in the days immediately following his attacks he forgets much that he has planned before the seizure.

This proletarian, this wage earner, this slave of the signed contract, this man who in the days of his direst need wrote three huge novels one after the other without a

pause, is actually one of the most self-critical of artists. He loves to the pitch of fanaticism the exquisite and delicate art of finishing and perfecting. Even under the lash of penury he files and polishes certain passages; twice he starts afresh on *The Idiot,* although his wife is hungry and the midwife is clamouring for her dues. His desire for completion is inexhaustible; but his poverty, too, is inexhaustible. The two powers wrestle for predominance, the external necessity with the inner urge. The artist in him suffers as greatly from a cleavage as does the man. The artist in him craves for perfection. In every aspect of his life, whether as man or as artist, he is crucified upon the cross of his duplex destiny.

Thus even his art is no solace to him; it is a torture, full of haste and flight, and can never become a home for this homeless wanderer. The passion, too, which drives him to creation, drives him over the boundary line of completion. Aye, he is hunted beyond completion into the realm of the everlastingly endless. Like truncated, unfinished towers (both in *The Brothers Karamazoff* and in *Crime and Punishment* we are given to understand there will be a second part, but no such part was ever written), the massive edifices of his novels points upward to the altitudes of religion, and are lost among the clouds of eternal questionings. They are not novels in the true sense; rather are they heroic masses, no longer related to literature; they seem to be prophetic preludes to the saga of a new humanity. For, deep as is Dostoeffsky's love for art, art is not an end in itself so far as he is concerned. As it was for his Russian forbears so it is for him, a confession of faith leading from the human to the divine. Thus has it ever been with his great compatriots. After writing *Dead Souls,* Gogol thrust

literature aside and became a mystic, a herald of the new Russia; at sixty, Tolstoy renounced art and became the evangelist of the good and the just; Gorki turned his back on fame in order to preach the revolution. Dostoeffsky, too, though he remained a diligent writer till the end, was concerned in later years, not to produce works of art, but to voice the gospel of the "Third Kingdom"; a myth relating to the new world which was to arise on Russian soil, an apocalyptic prophecy, obscure and enigmatic. Art for him was no more than a beginning: his goal was in the endless. Art was for him no more than a step on the way to the temple, not the holy place itself. His works in their aggregate enshrine something so great that words are not competent to express it; and, for the very reason that this great something is only hinted at and is not presented in a perishable form, these works are means for the fulfilment of man and of humanity.

THE TRANSGRESSOR OF BOUNDARIES

In your lack of power to finish anything,
lies the secret of your greatness.

GOETHE

TRADITION is a stone wall of the past surrounding the present: he who would penetrate into the future must step over it. For Mother Nature brooks no halt in the acquiring of knowledge; she seems to command that order shall be, and loves those only who destroy the old order for the sake of establishing the new. Within the individual man, and by the overplus of his own energies, she is perpetually creating anew those conquistadors who, from the familiar shores of their own soul, fare forth upon the waters of uncharted seas to discover fresh zones of the heart and hitherto unexplored spiritual spheres. Were it not for these bold adventurers, man would be caught in a snare of his own making, and his development would be confined within a narrow circle. Lacking these messengers who, in their haste to herald other dawns, outdistance their own selves, each generation would continue along the beaten way. To these great dreamers is due the knowledge humanity has gained of its own deeper significance. It is not the calm investigators, the geographers of the homeland region, who have brought the far horizons within the range of mortal vision, but the desperados who sailed away to discover new continents. Not the psychologists, men of science though they be, have laid bare the deep recesses of the modern soul, but

the men of creative genius who overstepped all frontiers.

Of those who in modern times overstepped the frontiers in the world of literature, Dostoeffsky was the greatest; no one has discovered so many new spiritual continents as this man to whom, as he himself declared, "the immeasurable and the unending are as necessary as our finite earth." It is wellnigh impossible to enumerate his many deeds: his wanderings over the cold desolations of thought; his descents into the hidden springs of the unconscious; his ascents, his somnambulistic ascents to the dizzy heights of self-knowledge. Where there was no beaten trail, he made one for himself; and by preference he dwelt in labyrinths and wildernesses. None has fathomed the mechanism and the magic of spiritual things with more precision: the soul is better known, it is more alive and more conscious and simultaneously more mysterious and divine, because of him. To him we owe it that we are more aware of our inborn mysteries, and are able, from the mountain-top of his works, to gaze upon the promised land of a future day.

The first barrier to fall down before Dostoeffsky's onslaught was that which blocked the way into the land of his birth. He opened for us the doors into Russia. He discovered his own nation to the world at large, widening our European consciousness, so that for the first time the Russian spirit was shown to be a fragment, a precious fragment, of the world spirit. Before his day, Russia had appeared as a buffer so far as Europe was concerned, a corridor, as it were, leading into Asia, an area on a map, a relic of a day long past, left behind to remind us of our own barbaric childhood. He, however, demonstrated what this desert held of power for the future; since Dostoeffsky's time we feel that Russia is the emblem of a new religion, that Rus

sia must pronounce the initial word in the great new canticle of mankind. He made the world richer by imparting a fresh knowledge and a fresh promise for the future. Pushkin showed us the Russian aristocracy; Tolstoy portrayed for us the simple, patriarchal, peasant type, a being who belonged essentially to the old, divided, worn-out world. Dostoeffsky fires us with his message of new possibilities; he is the first to fan to flame the genius of this new nation, and he makes us almost sorrowful that the ardent inspiration of a youthful world and of a soul in the making should be poured forth from Russia into the weary, stagnant world of Europe. During the Great War we could not but feel that we owed all our knowledge of Russia to Dostoeffsky; and it is he whom we Germans have to thank because, in spite of the fact that Russia was an enemy country, we could feel that it was the brotherland of the soul.

Had not Pushkin perished at the age of thirty-seven, he, too, might have achieved this same kind of cultural enlargement of our knowledge concerning the idea that Russia represents. But Dostoeffsky alone is responsible for the tremendous widening of our spiritual self-knowledge; his achievement here is unexampled in the history of literature. He is the psychologist of psychologists. The depths of the human heart exercise an uncanny attraction upon him; the unconscious, the subconscious, the unsearchable—these are his true worlds. Since Shakespeare lived and wrote we have not learned so much from any one as from Dostoeffsky about the secret sources of the emotions and the magic laws which govern their interactions; and just as Odysseus was the only mortal who ever returned from Hades and told us of his experiences there, so Dostoeffsky relates his voyages in the underworld of the soul. For he,

too, like Odysseus, was ciceroned by a god, or, an you will, a demon. His malady, by turns lifting him to the highest pinnacles of feeling which no common mortal may attain and hurling him down into the nethermost depths of anxiety and horror, had acclimatized him to the atmosphere of these regions beyond the margins of ordinary conscious experience—an atmosphere sometimes icily cold and sometimes irrespirably hot. Even as nocturnal animals see in the dark, so he sees into the obscure regions of the soul with clearer vision than others can see in the bright light of day. The fiery element which consumes our common clay seems to him no more than a beneficial warmth; and, since a morbid spiritual realm is his abiding place, he is intimately acquainted with the profoundest mysteries of life. He has gazed into the eyes of madness; like a sleepwalker unfalteringly aprowl in the moonlight, he treads the highest peaks of the emotions whence those who are awake and aware would shrink in terror. Dostoeffsky has delved deeper into the layers of the unconscious than has any physician or lawyer, or criminologist, or psychiatrist. All that science was later to reveal in this field of investigation, all that was subsequently dissected out from this underground region of the human spirit, all the strange phenomena of telepathy, hysteria, hallucination, and perversion, had become known to him, decades in advance, through personal experience, through suffering, and through imaginative insight. He probed the phenomena of the mind to where they verge on madness (intellectual excess), and crime (emotional excess), thereby opening up new spiritual continents. Thus, while writing the last pages of an old science, he was enriching art with the elements of a new psychology.

A new psychology! For the science of the mind likewise

has its methodology, no less than art, which adown the ages may seem to be a unity, yet unendingly must create new laws for its being. In this realm, too, knowledge suffers a change; it progresses through fresh solutions and new determining factors. Just as the experimental chemist is constantly discovering new elements, and has again and again been able to show that what were regarded as elements (as indivisible) are really compounds, so have psychologists been able to an ever-increasing degree to split up the apparent unity of feeling into an infinitude of impulses and counter-impulses. Despite the existence, in earlier days, of isolated men of genius who were forerunners of the modern outlook, it is indubitable that a line must be drawn between the old psychology and the new. From Homer to Shakespeare, we find in the works of the great writers the same restricted psychological outlook—a psychology that runs straight forward in a narrow groove. To our ancestors of long ago, man was still a formula, a quality equipped with bones and flesh. Odysseus is cunning; Achilles, brave; Ajax, wrathful; Nestor, wise. These men's resolves and actions, one and all, are conceived as simple, and manifestly dictated by an impulse of the will. Even Shakespeare, who stood at the branching of the ways between the old art and the new, composes his characters so that the conflicting melodies which make up their being are yet sustained by a dominant pedal. Nevertheless he was responsible for sending precursors into our modern age from the mental atmosphere of the Middle Ages. In Hamlet he gives us the first enigmatical character, the progenitor of the differentiated men of our own day. Here, for the first time within the meaning of the new psychology, a man's will is frustrated through his inhibitions; the mirror of self-observation is

placed in the mind itself; the being with a knowledge of his own reactions is portrayed; his duplexity of purpose, which affects him both internally and externally, is exposed; we are shown a man thinking in the article of doing, and realizing himself during the process of thought. Here for the first time we are given the study of a man living the kind of mental and emotional life we ourselves live; he feels as we feel, though he has not yet emerged from a twilit consciousness, and is still enmeshed in the toils of a superstitious age. The affective influences that determine his most important actions are objectified for him as magic potions and as ghosts, instead of being recognized as mere illusions and forebodings.

But the tremendous psychological discovery has, nevertheless, been made; the duplexity of the emotional life has been laid bare. The new spiritual continent is henceforward open to exploration. The man of romantic temperament, as portrayed by Byron or Goethe or Shelley, such a man as "Childe Harold" or Werther, for instance, aware of the clash between his own passionate disposition and the sober world of everyday life, promotes by his very restlessness of spirit the chemical disintegration of the emotions, and thus favours their psychological analysis. Exact science, all the while, is providing us with valuable information. Then comes Stendhal. He can tell us more about the "crystallization" of the feelings than could any of his predecessors; he knows much about the bivalence of the emotions, and their capacity for metamorphosis. He divines the obscure conflict which takes place in the heart before any decision can be made. But the innate lethargy of his genius, the insouciance of his character, makes it impossible for him to reveal all the dynamics of the unconscious.

Dostoeffsky was the first to pluck out the heart of the mystery. He achieved the complete analysis of the emotions, he exploded the concept of the unity of the feelings, with the result that the characters in his books are endowed with psyches new in the world of literature. The analyses of the mind undertaken by his predecessors, bold though they may have appeared at the time, seem to us superficial in comparison with Dostoeffsky's work in the same field. It is as if we were reading a textbook on electrical technique written thirty years ago, wherein tentative surmises as to the possible developments of the science were made, but in which there was no real approach to our present-day knowledge.

In Dostoeffsky's mental universe nothing appears as a simple, indivisible element; everything is a conglomerate, is a transitional form, an intermediate form, a form which is in a state of flux. We are shown the mind in a tumult of indecision and confusion before the accomplishment of any and every deed; a frenzied interplay between desires and actualities shakes the feelings together pellmell. Constantly we think that we have struck the bedrock motive underlying a decision, or have fathomed the reasons for some particular craving; but invariably we find that, after all, there are yet deeper motives and reasons. Hate, love, carnal desire, infirmity of purpose, vanity, pride, lust for power, humility, veneration, all the impulses of the human heart, are entangled one with the other in everlasting transformation. Dostoeffsky discloses the mind as a realm of strange confusions, and sublime chaos. He portrays men who become drunkards out of a longing for purity, and who become criminals because they crave to experience remorse; he shows us men whose reverence for purity and

innocence leads them to ravish young girls, and men whose religious cravings find satisfaction in blasphemy. When his characters lust, they do so quite as much in the hope of a repulse as in the hope of a gratification of their desires. Their defiance, if we look beneath the surface, is nothing but a cloak to hide their shyness; their love is a starveling hate; their hate is a camouflaged love.

One contrast fecundates another. He shows us wastrels who are what they are because they hanker afer suffering, and self-mortifiers who yearn for carnal pleasures; their wills spin dizzily as in a raging whirlpool. In the phase of longing, they experience the pleasure of attainment; in the very lists of love, they are overwhelmed with the disgust of satiety; while action is in progress, they are already repenting the unfinished deed; and when the hour of repentance has struck, they are in retrospect luxuriating in the delight of action. All their feelings have an obverse and a reverse—unless there be an even greater complication of aspects. The deeds they do are not the ones they want to do; and the sayings of their souls are never uttered by their lips. Every feeling, therefore, is many-sided, complex, ambiguous.

The upshot is that none of Dostoeffsky's characters can be summed up in a simple linguistic concept, not one of them can be adequately described in terms of unified feeling. For instance, we may speak of Fedor Karamazoff as a libertine, and the expression seems to describe him exhaustively; but Svidrigailoff is likewise a libertine, and so is the unnamed student in *A Raw Youth*—yet there is a world of difference between them, an immense diversity in the feelings each of them experiences. Svidrigailoff's sensuousness takes the form of a cold and soulless depravity; he is the

calculating tactician of debauchery. Karamazoff's licentiousness is really a love of life, is debauchery pushed to the point of personal uncleanliness, is a profound impulse urging him to mix himself with the basest things life has to offer because such things are emanations of life, and Fedor, from sheer excess of vitality, wishes to enjoy the very dregs of life. The former is a libertine because of a poor emotional make-up, the latter because of a superfluity of feeling; that which in the sickly Svidrigailoff is caused by acute irritation of the mind, is in Fedor a chronic inflammation. Again, Svidrigailoff is no more than a half-hearted voluptuary, indulging in petty vices, a dirty little beast, an "insect" having sensual lusts. Likewise that nameless student in *A Raw Youth* represents the degeneration of spiritual depravity into sexual perversion. All three are "libertines"; but their feelings, let me repeat, belong to separate worlds. Now, just as in this instance carnal desire is differentiated and dissected out into its component parts and its most far-reaching ramifications, so is every feeling and every impulse analysed in Dostoeffsky's books, until at length we reach the primal source of energy which is the ultimate contrast, the unending conflict, between the ego and the world, between affirmation and surrender, between pride and humility, between extravagance and thrift, between isolation and co-operation, between centripetal and centrifugal force, between glorification and self-abasement, between man and God. Any conjuncture of opposites is possible, according as circumstances demand; but in the last resort they are fundamental emotions belonging to the realm which lies somewhere betwixt spirit and flesh. Dostoeffsky was the first to reveal to us this teeming multiplicity of emotions, this complexity of our spiritual universe.

But the most amazing of all Dostoeffsky's achievements is his analysis of the love sentiment. For hundreds of years, ever since the days of classical antiquity, literature has taken the relation of man to woman and woman to man as its central theme and as the fountain-head of existence. Yet Dostoeffsky has pushed his researches in this domain into deeper channels and on to higher peaks; indeed he has won to an ultimate knowledge of the topic, and that is perhaps the greatest of his deeds. Love is for other imaginative writers the aim of life, the goal towards which the story as a work of art is directed; for Dostoeffsky, however, love is no more than a stage on life's highway. In the work of the generality of novelists, the glorious second of reconciliation, the wonderful moment when all contentions are appeased, when the spirit and the senses experience a mutual interpenetration, and when the two sexes are merged in one perfect and divine emotion, beacons at the very outset. As contrasted with Dostoeffsky's treatment of the subject, we cannot but see that other authors deal with this vital conflict in a ridiculously primitive manner. Love, as they show it, touches men lightly with a magic wand; it is a mystery, the incomprehensible and ultimate mystery of life. Lovers love, are happy if they attain their end, unhappy if they are thwarted. Mutual love is presented as the most seraphic of states.

Dostoeffsky's heaven is at a far greater altitude. An embrace, for him, does not mean conjunction; harmony is not unison. Love is not a state of happiness, a conciliation; but, rather, a struggle in a loftier sphere, a sharper pang in the perennial wound, an intenser degree of the customary life agony. When Dostoeffsky's men and women love, they do not find rest. Far from it. Never are they more

profoundly shaken by their intrinsic contradictions than at the instant when they realize that their love is reciprocated; they do not allow love to master them, but endeavour to overcome it. Genuine offspring of the cleavage within himself, they do not pause to savour this final instant of delight. They despise the sweet equation of the moment (one which is so delectable to most mortals) when the lover and his beloved know that they are equals in their reciprocal passion. This would mean an acceptance of harmony: it would be a recognition that the end had been gained, that a boundary had been reached; whereas they live only for the limitless. Dostoeffsky's men and women do not want to love as they are loved: all they want is to love, so that they may be the victims, may be the most generous givers; they vie with one another in intensifying their feelings, until love which began as a gentle game becomes a sob in the throat, a groan, a combat, a pain. With a revulsion of feeling they are happy when their love is scorned, for then they alone are the donors, giving endlessly and asking nothing in return. That is why hatred so closely resembles love, and love hatred, among these creatures of Dostoeffsky's fashioning. Even in the brief spells when the lovers concentrate their affection one on the other, we find the emotional unity rent asunder; for these people never seem capable of loving with the combined strength of their senses and their intellects. They love with the former or with the latter, separately; flesh and spirit never achieve harmony. We have but to contemplate any of his women characters. They are all of them Kundrys, living simultaneously in two emotional spheres, serving the holy grail with the soul while the body is consumed with passion in the magic garden of Klingsor.

Most authors fight shy of the perplexing question of divided affection, but in Dostoeffsky's books such a splitting of the love passion is an everyday occurrence. Nastasya Filipovna loves the gentle Myshkin with the spiritual side of her nature, while at the same time she has a physical longing for Rogozhin, the prince's enemy. She shakes off the prince at the church door in order to fling herself into the bed of his rival, and escapes from the drunkard's carousal into the arms of her saviour. Her soul seems to stand on high ground contemplating what her body does below; her body appears to be in a trance while her soul is rapt in ecstasy. Grushenka, too, is thus torn in twain. She simultaneously loves and hates her first seducer; she has a bodily craving for Dmitri and a spiritual passion for Alyosha, who has already become quite unfleshly. The mother of the "Raw Youth" loves her first husband from a sense of gratitude, and Versiloff slavishly from an abject sense of humility.

These ideas, which other psychologists lightly group together under the generic name of "love," are treated by Dostoeffsky in a hundred different ways and considered under a thousand different aspects. We have seen the same phenomenon take place in the domain of medicine, where of old the doctors were content to group a whole series of maladies under one name, for which nowadays there exist a hundred names and a hundred different methods of treatment. Under Dostoeffsky's delicate manipulation, love may become hatred (Alexandra), sympathy (Dunia), defiance (Rogozhin), sensuousness (Fedor Karamazoff); yet always behind these manifestations of love, however distorted, there remains a primal emotion. For him, love is never like an element, indivisible, unanalysable, an arche-

typal phenomenon, a miracle: he invariably elucidates and decomposes the passionate emotion. And the changes he rings upon the theme of love are unending. Consider Katerina Ivanovna. She meets Dmitri at a ball, he asks to be introduced, he affronts her, and she shows her dislike. He takes his revenge by inflicting a gross humiliation upon her, whereupon she loves him—or, rather, she does not love him so much as the debasement he has been instrumental in bringing upon her. Under the impression that she loves him, she gives herself to him; but it is her own self-oblation she is in lovè with, and the more she appears to love him the more in reality does she hate him. This hatred swamps his life and ruins it; but at the moment when he is ruined, when her own sacrifice is proved to be a lie and has therefore avenged his primary insult—she loves him once more. Thus complicated is Dostoeffsky's treatment of love! He begins where an ordinary novelist ends. Whereas in most works of fiction the two lovers, after passing through all conceivable vicissitudes, are joined together on the last page when their troubles are behind them, this is precisely the moment when Dostoeffsky's tragedies begin. He has no interest in love as the gentle reconciler of the sexes, and does not contemplate such love as embodying the meaning and the triumph of life. He goes back to the great traditions of classical antiquity, when a hero had not merely to win a woman, but to overcome a whole world and all the gods besides. His men raise their eyes, not to women, but to the very countenance of God. He depicts a tragedy of wider significance than the battle of the sexes.

Once having made ourselves familiar with these profound analyses of the emotions, we cannot go back to the

manner of an earlier day. If art is to be true to itself it must no longer try to set up the idols Dostoeffsky has overthrown, it must no longer continue to describe the narrow worlds of society and the conventional emotions, and ignore the intermediate realm of the mind which he has done so much to elucidate. He was the first to give us an inkling of the kind of beings we of the new time are becoming, as contrasted with our forefathers; we are creatures with far more diversified feelings, because we are burdened with so much more experience than they. It is amazing how greatly, during the fifty odd years since Dostoeffsky's books appeared, we have come to resemble the people he portrayed and how many of his prophecies have been fulfilled. The new continent he was the first to set foot on is perhaps already ours, and the frontiers he strode across may well enclose our permanent homeland.

Much of what we are today experiencing he foresaw. He opened up new depths in the human soul, revealing secrets that no mortal had suspected before his time. Yet though we have become through him more familiar with the workings of our own minds, this new knowledge has not puffed us up with pride, nor does it prevent our contemplating life as something daimonic; for in spite of our greater self-consciousness, we have not become freer—indeed, we seem more closely shackled than before. The modern does not look upon lightning with any less awe because he knows it to be an electrical phenomenon, a discharge of atmospheric tensions; nor does his profounder knowledge of the mechanism of the human mind make him less reverent in his contemplation of mankind. More than any other imaginative writer of our time Dostoeffsky, the dissector, the atomizer of the emotions, has gifted us

with a profounder and more generalized feeling of world brotherhood. And Dostoeffsky, unrivalled in his knowledge of the human heart, was unrivalled likewise in his veneration for the Incomprehensible that shapes it: for the Divine, for God.

TORMENTED BY GOD

My whole life long, God has tormented me.

DOSTOEFFSKY

"Is there a God or not?" Ivan Karamazoff asks the Devil in that strange and terrible duologue. The tempter smiles. He is in no hurry to answer, or to ease the mind of a tortured man. "With savage intensity," Ivan presses his question, determined to extract a solution of this most important problem of existence. The Devil whets Ivan's impatience by saying: "Upon my word I do not know!" Out of a fiendish delight in torture, the Devil withholds his answer, leaving Ivan in the throes of a despairing doubt as to God's existence.

All Dostoeffsky's characters, and, indeed, he himself, harbour this devil within them; all ask the same question, and none receives an answer. All of them are equipped with the "superior heart" which is capable of tormenting itself with these perplexing questions. "Do you believe in God?" Stavrogin, a man transformed into a fiend, demands of the hesitant Shatoff. The latter trembles, turns pale, for the question is like red-hot steel in the young man's heart. It is always the most sterling of Dostoeffsky's characters who wince at this ultimate avowal, just as he himself so often was tortured with anxiety on behalf of what he held to be most sacred. When Stavrogin presses for an answer, Shatoff stammers: "I believe in Russia." It is only on Russia's

account that he makes his profession of faith in God.

This hidden God, and the discovery of God as he exists both within us and without—here we have the basic problem in all Dostoeffsky's books. To him, as the most Russian of Russians, the greatest and most vital product of this vast community of people, the solution of the enigma of God and immortality, is "the most important thing in life." None of his characters can evade the issue; it shadows their every deed—a shadow now cast before and now lagging in the rear, a reproach and a contrition. There is but one who tries to escape, tries to deny that there is any riddle, and becomes the martyr of his own thoughts; that man is Kirilloff in *The Possessed,* who has to kill himself in order to kill God, thereby proving more forcibly than all the others the existence of God and the impossibility of ever eluding him.

All these people shun talking of God, they avoid mentioning his name; they would like to keep to the small talk so much in favour among English novelists; they discuss serfdom, and women, and the Sistine Madonna, and Europe; yet the weight of the problem that obsesses them drags them inevitably back to the problem of Russia and God, the two being for them identical. No more than in their emotional life can these men exercise control over their thoughts; there is a constant see-saw from the actual and practical into the abstract, from the finite to the infinite. But no matter whither their flights may have taken them, they invariably come back to the problem of God. This enigma is like a whirlpool which mercilessly draws all their ideas into its vortex; it is a thorn in their sides, and frets them into a fever.

A fever! For Dostoeffsky's God is the principle of un-

rest; he is the primal father of contrasts, simultaneously the affirmative and the negative, the Yea and the Nay. Dostoeffsky's God is not the benevolent and venerable ancient depicted by the old masters, nor is he the gentle spirit hovering above the clouds as portrayed in the writings of the mystics. He is, rather, the live spark between the electrical poles of the archetypal contrasts; he is not a being but a condition, a condition of tension, a process whereby the emotions are consumed; he is a fire, a flame, heating men to the point of ecstasy. He is a lash, scourging them out of their warm, calm bodies into infinity; he lures them to every excess whether of word or deed, and hurls them into the burning bush of vice. He resembles the men who are his creatures, the men who created him, for he is an insatiable God, whom no exertion can master, no thought can fully grasp, no sacrifice content. He is the everlastingly unattainable, the pain of pains; and it is Dostoeffsky himself who cries from Kirilloff's lips: "My whole life long, God has tormented me."

Here we have the key to Dostoeffsky's suffering: he needs God, and cannot find him. Sometimes he fancies he can hear the divine voice, and ecstasy seizes him; but his need for negation pulls him once more to earth. No man has expressed the need for God more poignantly. "God is necessary to me," he once said, "because he is the only being one can always love." Another time: "No quest causes a man so much heartsearching as the endless quest for something he can worship." For sixty years he bowed beneath this "pain of God," loving God all the while as he loved torment, loving God above all else because God is eternal pain, and love of pain is the fundamental thought of Dostoeffsky's existence. For sixty years he fought his way to-

wards God, and, "like dried grass parched for want of water," he languished with the desire to believe.

The man whose very nature is cloven in twain aspires to unity; the unrestful soul, pursued by the hound of heaven, longs for rest; he who has been swept away by the torrent of the passions pines for quiet in the tranquil bosom of the sea. He seeks God as the giver of peace, and finds him as a raging fire. He would gladly be insignificant, dull-witted, in order to have no difficulty in holding fast to God; how delighted he would be if he could only believe implicitly "like the tradesman's fat wife"; he would joyfully forfeit his keen awareness and his extensive knowledge if only he could become the most fervent of believers; like Verlaine, he prays: "Donnez-moi de la simplicité." To consume the brain in emotion, to flow away into the peace of God, that is his dream. He stretches his hands Godward, he raises ardent supplication, he cries, he throws the harpoons of his logic hoping to capture God, his love is a craving for God, amounting to an "unseemly passion," a paroxysm, an extravaganza.

But does his fanatical desire for faith make him a believer? Was Dostoeffsky, the most eloquent advocate of orthodoxy, was he himself a believer, a poeta christianissimus? Certainly he was so at times, when his spasm jerked him into infinity and he convulsively clutched at God. Then he found the harmony he could never find on earth; then he who had been crucified on the cross of his duplexity, ascended into the one and only heaven.

And yet even at such moments something remains awake in him and refuses to be consumed in the conflagration of the soul. At the very second when he seems to be completely dissolved, rapt in a supra-terrestrial intoxication, his un-

canny analytical spirit is on the prowl, and is plumbing the waters in which he hopes to become submerged. His double revolts against this discarding of personality. Even in his endeavour to solve the problem of God, he is vexed by the irremediable cleavage in his temperament, a cleavage with which we are all of us born, but which has rent none more profoundly than it did Doestoeffsky. At one and the same time he is the truest of believers and the most arrant atheist; these polar extremes are convincingly portrayed in the characters of his novels, though he himself remained unconvinced and undecided; we are shown, on the one hand, abject humility and the craving to become absorbed into the divine essence, and, on the other, the magnificent pride of being God oneself. He loves both the servant of God and the man who denies God, both Alyosha and Ivan Karamazoff. The great council of his works is in perpetual session, but he can come to no decision there either for the true believers or for the heretics. His faith oscillates between Yea and Nay, the two poles of the universe. In the very presence of God, Dostoeffsky remains banished from the land of unity.

Like Sisyphus, he was condemned to roll up the hill of belief a stone which as soon as it reached the top always rolled down again. He was constantly endeavouring to attain to God, and was invariably unsuccessful in the attempt. Yet was not Dostoeffsky the great missionary of faith? Do not his works reverberate with the hymn to God? Are not all his writings, whether political or belletristic, a continual, an imperious, an indubitable testimony to the need for the existence of God? Do they not command us to be orthodox believers, and to look upon atheism as the sin of sins? Yes; but are we not confusing will with truth, belief with the

postulate of belief? Dostoeffsky, the bard of perpetual conversion and of contrasts become manifest, preaches belief as a necessity, and preaches it all the more devoutly to others because he himself is not a believer. That is to say, he is not a believer in the sense of possessing a steady, secure, calm, and intimate faith, a faith which formulates as the highest duty of its acolytes the possession of an "enlightened enthusiasm."

During his term in Siberia he wrote to a woman friend: "As far as I am concerned, I look upon myself as a child of the age, a child of unbelief and doubt; it is probable, nay I know for certain, that I shall remain so to my dying day. I have been tortured with longing to believe—am so, indeed, even now; and the yearning grows stronger, the more cogent the intellectual difficulties that stand in the way."

He never expressed himself with greater clarity, never epitomized more succinctly this craving to believe which has its roots in unbelief. Here we are presented with one of those marvellous transvaluations which Dostoeffsky was capable of effecting: he himself has no faith, and precisely because he knows the agony of this unfaith, because, as he himself says, he knows that he will be tortured with unbelief until the end of his days, he preaches to others a belief in a God whose existence he does not credit. This man so tormented by God desires that men shall be godly, he who is himself poignantly afflicted with lack of faith wishes that others shall be happy believers. Nailed to the cross of his own unbelief, he preaches orthodoxy to his nation, thus doing violence to his own convictions because he knows that they rend and consume; he preaches a lie which brings happiness to those who, like the peasants, believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. He whose faith is not even

as a grain of mustard seed, who rebels against God, and, as he proudly declares, "has voiced as powerful an atheism as any in Europe," demands that his compatriots shall submit to the dominance of the Russian priesthood. In order that he may preserve his fellow-mortals from the persecution of God, a persecution he has suffered from so intensely, he makes himself the prophet of God's love. For he realizes that "a lapse from faith, or any disturbance to a man's beliefs, constitutes for a certain portion of humanity so great a torment that hanging were better than to endure the pain longer." He did not seek any such way of personal release, but, rather, took upon himself the rôle of a martyr of doubt. Mankind, however, mankind for whom his love knew no end, mankind must be spared; just as his Grand Inquisitor would be glad to spare mankind the doubtful boon of freedom of conscience, and rock men to sleep in the dead cradle of authority. Thus, instead of arrogantly proclaiming the truth as he sees it, he humbly preaches the falsehood of belief. He shifts the religious problem into the arena of the national problem, which he infuses with the fanatical zeal rightly pertaining to the former. And he, too, answers the question, "Do you believe in God?" when he makes Shatoff say: "I believe in Russia."

This is his salvation, herein he may take sanctuary. His words no longer represent a cleavage: they have become a dogma. God has vouchsafed no sign: very well, then Dostoeffsky will create a mediator between himself and his conscience, will create a Christ, the new herald of a new humanity, a Russian Christ. In his urgent need for faith, he plunges forward out of reality, out of the time to which he belongs; he hurls himself into a vague immensity—such as is alone conformable to this man who knows no moderation.

floods the notion with the unstinted measure of his belief in the future of his country. He is another John, making ready the way for a new Christ whom he has not yet seen; but he speaks in the name of this new Christ, in the name of Russia, on behalf of the whole world.

His messianic writings (mainly confined to his political essays and to certain passages in the *Brothers Karamazoff*) are obscure. The visage of the new Christ emerges indistinctly from the pages, the new thought of redemption and universal reconciliation is confused; a Byzantine countenance is revealed to us, hard of feature, severe of mien. As from an ancient and smoke-begrimed ikon, strangely piercing orbs gaze into our eyes; they are filled with ardour, an infinitude of ardour, but likewise with hate and with harshness. And Dostoeffsky himself is awesome when, to us western Europeans whom he regards as no better than heathen, he proclaims his Russian evangel. This political propagandist, this zealot, then assumes the aspect of a malignant, fanatical monk from the Middle Ages, brandishing the Byzantine cross like a scourge. He preaches his gospel as if he were in a frenzy, like a dervish rather than a gentle prophet; he gives vent to his boundless passion in fierce invective. He batters every objection with a club; his voice peals forth from the rostrum of the epoch, feverish, raucous with hatred, vainglorious and arrogant. Foam flecks his lips; and, his hands trembling with passion, he slings his exorcisms into our world.

A born iconoclast, he storms forward to destroy all that is hallowed for us in our European civilization. He betramples our holy of holies, our ideals, in order to prepare the way for his new Christ. His Muscovite intolerance

makes him rage to the verge of madness. Europe, what is it? A graveyard, filled, maybe, with expensive tombstones, but filled likewise with the stench of corruption, its contents not even fit to serve as dung for the new seed. This new seed can only blossom in Russian soil. The French? Vain fops! The Germans? A base nation of sausage makers! The English? Hawkers of a crude rationalism! The Jews? They stink of pride! Catholicism is the doctrine of the Devil, and is an insult to Christ. Protestantism is a rationalistic State religion, a mockery of the one and true faith (i. e. the Russian Church). The Pope? Satan wearing the tiara. Our cities? Babylon, the great whore of the Apocalypse. Science? A vain delusion. Democracy? The skilly of persons suffering from softening of the brain. Revolution? A puppet-show of fools born or fools made. Pacifism? An old wives' tale. All the ideas (western) Europe has given birth to are no more than a bunch of faded flowers, fit only for the dustbin. The Russian idea is alone true and great and right. This hyperbolist poniards every protest as he rushes on his way. With a "we understand you but you do not understand us," he stamps upon discussion. "We Russians are omnicomprehending; you are narrow-minded and limited," he declares. Russia alone, with all that in her is, he proclaims as right: tsar and knout, orthodox priest and peasant, troika and ikon; and these things acquire additional rightness the more they are anti-European, the more they are Asiatic, Mongolian, Tatar, the more they are conservative, retrogressive, unprogressive, unintellectual, Byzantine. "Let us be Asiatics, let us be Sarmatians," he exclaims. "Away from Petersburg, the European city; back to Moscow and Siberia! The new Russia is the Third Kingdom." This mediæval monk, drunken with divine ecstasy, will brook no

discussion. Down with reason! Russia is the dogma which must be accepted without questioning. "Russia cannot be understood by means of the rational faculties; it can only be understood through faith." He who refuses to bend the knee to this new dogma is a foe, is antichrist; a crusade must be preached against the enemy of mankind. Shrilly he sounds the call to arms. Austria must be trampled under foot, the crescent must be torn from Saint Sophia's in Constantinople. Germany must be humbled and England vanquished. A crazy imperialism hides its arrogance under the cowl of the monk, and the words ring forth: "Dieu le veut!" The whole world must come under Russia's hegemony, that the kingdom of God may be established.

Russia, therefore, is Christ, the new redeemer; (western) Europeans are the heathen. Nothing can save us reprobates from the fires of our damnation. What is our original sin? That we were not born Russians. Our western world has no place in this new kingdom; it has first to pass away and become absorbed in the Russian world-empire, in the new kingdom of God; then only can it hope for salvation. "Every human being must first of all become a Russian," are Dostoeffsky's actual words. Then only can the Third Kingdom be established. Russia is the sustainer of God: she must first conquer the world by the sword, then only can the "ultimate word" of mankind be spoken. And this last word is, for Dostoeffsky, "reconciliation." According to him the Russian genius is shown in the capacity to understand all, and to solve every contradiction. Because of this power of universal comprehension, the Russian is in the highest sense of the term malleable. His State, the State of the future, will be the Church, will assume the form of a fraternal community, will permeate instead of subjugating.

And the words which follow seem as if they were expressly conceived as a prologue to Russia's part in the Great War (which at the outset was so proximate to his ideas, but which in the end came nearer to those of Tolstoy): "We shall be the first to announce to the world that we do not wish to thrive at the cost of the repression of individuality or the coercion of foreign nationalities. On the contrary, it is only by means of the free and independent development of every nation and by brotherly unity that we can hope to achieve our aim." Surely Lenin and Trotzky are foreshadowed in this prophetic utterance—but the Great War as well, for he, ever an advocate of the intensification of contrasts, was an enthusiast for war.

General reconciliation, that is the goal; but Russia is the only way to this goal: "The earth shall be re-created from the east." The everlasting ray shall stream across the Urals, and the humble folk—not the well-informed minds, not European culture, but the humble folk with their energies so strangely linking them to the earth—shall arise to save the world. Active love shall take the place of power; and personal enmities shall be replaced by a feeling of all-embracing fraternity. The new, the Russian Christ will bring about a universal reconciliation, and will solve all contradictions. And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid! Dostoeffsky's voice trembles as he speaks of the Third Kingdom whose advent he proclaims, the Russia which is to absorb the whole earth. Now he is breathless with the ecstasy of belief; and he fills us with wonder, he who knows reality more intimately than any man alive, as he gives voice to his messianic dream.

He dreams his dream of a new Christ into the word

"Russia," into the "Idea of Russia," the idea of that reconciliation of opposites which all his life long, in his art, nay even in God himself, he yearned in vain to bring about. But when he speaks of Russia, which Russia does he mean? The real Russia or the mystical Russia; the political Russia or the prophetic? As ever with Dostoeffsky—all are included simultaneously in his concept. You must not ask for logic from a man who is guided by passionate impulse, any more than you must ask a dogmatist to give convincing grounds for his dogma. Throughout Dostoeffsky's messianic writings and in his literary works, his ideas are poured forth helter-skelter, so that it is very difficult to get a coherent grasp of what he is driving at. Russia is sometimes made to personify Christ, sometimes God the Father; at other times it is the realm of Peter the Great; and then, again, it is the New Rome, the unification of the spirit with might, of the tiara with the imperial crown; now its capital city is announced as being Moscow, next Constantinople, and finally the New Jerusalem. Ideals expressing the utmost humility and the most divine universal brotherliness, alternate with slavophil yearnings for power and conquest; a political horoscope will be cast with amazing aptness, and a moment later we shall read fantastic promises, or prophesies of an apocalyptic nature. Sometimes he will restrict his idea of Russia within the political confines of a specific hour, at other times he gives the idea so much latitude that it is lost in the infinite. Just as in his art, so here when he is voicing his message, we have a mixture of water and fire, of realism and fantasy. His genius and his exaggeration are to a certain degree controlled in his novels, but in his political writings they are given free rein. With all the passionate ardour of his nature, he preaches Russia as the

saviour of the world, as the only bringer of seraphic joy. Never has the national idea been promulgated to Europe as a world ideal more proudly, with more inspired fervour, more seductively, more intoxicatingly, more ecstatically, than the Russian national idea is proclaimed in the books of Dostoeffsky.

At first sight, this fanatical extoller of his own race, this pitiless and ecstatic Russian monk, this arrogant pamphleteer, this insincere believer, appears to be an unorganic excrescence of the Russian colossus. But the fanaticism is essential to the unification of Dostoeffsky's personality. Whenever we are gravelled by a phenomenon concerning this writer, we must search for the explanation in its opposite. We must never forget that Dostoeffsky is himself both affirmation and negation, both the Yea and the Nay, both self-destruction and self-exaltation—contrast driven to the extreme. His excessive arrogance is merely the reflexion of his excessive humility; his exaggerated folk-consciousness no more than the polar opposite of his exacerbated feeling of personal nullity. He is cloven in twain, one half of his individuality consisting of pride, the other half of humbleness. He debases himself: throughout the many volumes which make up his works, you will seek in vain for a word of personal vanity, or pride, or self-glorification. Only self-depreciation is to be found in his books, self-disgust, self-accusation, self-abasement. All the pride he possesses is lavished on his race and on the idea of his nation. Everything that relates to himself as an isolated individual he discards; everything that is impersonal to himself, everything that relates to the Russian in him, to the universally human in him, he idolizes. His disbelief in God forces him to become God's advocate; his disbelief in himself makes

him the prophet of his nation and of mankind. Even in the realm of ideas he is a martyr, who nails himself to the cross in order to redeem the Idea.

This is Dostoeffsky's great secret: to acquire fruitfulness by means of contrast. To strain a contrast into the infinite so that it embraces the whole world, and to utilize the energies thence derived so as to promote man's future welfare: such is his aim. Other writers construct an ideal by magnifying their own personalities, for they create replicas of themselves, replicas cleansed, clarified, bettered, ennobled; thus their conception of future man is little more than a transfigured image of their own type. Dostoeffsky, however, builds up his ideal from his own antithesis, debasing himself, the living man, to a mere negative. All he wishes to be is the mould into which the new form is to be poured, so that in the future what was Dostoeffsky's left hand shall become the new man's right, the hollows shall be transformed into elevations, doubt into faith, duality into unity. "I myself would willingly perish if only others might be happy," exclaims Father Zosima. Dostoeffsky looks at the matter in a more spiritual way, for he annihilates himself as a personality in order to find resurrection in the future man.

Dostoeffsky's ideal is, therefore, to be what he is not, to feel as he does not feel, to think as he does not think, to live as he does not live. Into the tiniest details of his anatomy, the new man is to be Dostoeffsky's opposite; everything that is shadowy in Dostoeffsky is to be clear-cut in the future being; out of his Nay the coming Yea is to be born. He carries his condemnation of himself so far as to include even his individual physique, that everything may be to the advantage of the man who is to arise hereafter. He destroys the egocentric man for the sake of the universal man.

If we study the pictures we have of him, his photographs and his death-mask, and lay these beside the portraits he has given us of his ideal man, what do we find? That Alyosha Karamazoff, Father Zosima, Prince Myshkin (the three sketches he made of the Russian Christ, of the saviour) are the very opposites of what he was himself. Dostoeffsky's face is gloomy, enigmatic, and sad; these others are cheerful, and animated with peace and candour. His voice is husky and his speech abrupt; they talk in low, soft tones. His hair is harsh, and dark in colour, his eyes deep-set and restless; they are fair and their faces are framed in silky locks, their glance betrays neither anxiety nor agitation. He tells us that they look out upon the world with steady eyes, wherein one can detect the sweet smile of a child. His lips are thin and scornful and passionate, and know not how to laugh; Alyosha and Zosima laugh freely, like men who are sure of themselves, and as they laugh their white teeth flash merrily. His countenance is that of a fettered man, the slave of his passions; it is burdened with thought: their faces express inner freedom, the total lack of inhibitions, the complete absence of suspense. He is a duality, torn and rent; they are harmonious, each man constituting a unity in himself. He is the egocentric man, pent within his own personality; they are types of the universally human, soaring upward towards God.

This creation of a moral ideal sired by self-destruction has never been more successfully accomplished, whether we consider the deed from the mental or from the ethical outlook. Filled with a sense of self-reprobation, he cuts open his veins in order with his own blood to paint the picture of the man of a later day. He himself represents the passion-fraught man, the convulsive being, the creature whose en-

thusiasms are no more than explosions of the senses or furious conflagrations of the nerves. They are gentle flames, constant in their glow. They persevere in their undertakings, and achieve far more than Dostoeffsky does by his erratic leaps and bounds from despondency to ecstasy. They have true meekness in their hearts, and do not fear to make themselves ridiculous; they are not, as he is, perpetually being affronted and lowered in their self-esteem. They can talk freely with everybody, and all who come into contact with them feel at ease; they are not perpetually harassed by a hysterical anxiety lest they give offence to others or themselves be insulted; they do not glance round apprehensively at every step they take. God torments them no longer, but comforts them. They know about everything, and because everything is an open book to them they can forgive all, neither judging others nor condemning themselves; they do not brood upon the veracity of things, but believe in them simply, and are thankful. It is strange indeed to find a man so agitated as Dostoeffsky holding these free-and-easy people to be the highest form of life; to find a man so divided as he postulating unity as the ultimate ideal; to find the revolutionary postulating submission. The martyrdom he has suffered at God's hands has turned to ineffable beatitude; his doubt has become certainty; his hysteria, health; his pain, an all-embracing happiness. The last and most beautiful thing of existence is that which he, the conscious and super-conscious individual, never knew, and what he therefore esteems the sublimest thing a man can possess: naivety, a child's ingenuous heart, a sweet and natural cheerfulness.

His favourite characters go about with a gentle smile upon their lips; they are omniscient, and yet no pride in-

flates them; they dwell in the secret places of life, not as in a fiery pit, but as in the blue vault of heaven. Theirs is the primal peace of existence; they have vanquished pain and anxiety, and have become filled with a boundless sense of the brotherhood of things. They have been released from the ego, and have attained to the highest felicity known to the children of this world: impersonality. Thus this most finished individualist has transformed the wisdom of a Goethe into a new creed.

In the history of the human spirit there is no other example of so complete a self-annihilation; nor has it been given us to witness elsewhere so admirable a creation of an ideal out of personal contrasts. Dostoeffsky is his own executioner. He nails his knowledge to the cross, that it may testify to belief. His body is racked, that it may, through the instrumentality of art, bring forth the new man; and his personal unity is sacrificed to the totality of mankind. He desires his own destruction, that a happier humanity may arise; he takes upon himself the full burden of suffering, that others may rejoice. During all the sixty years of his life, he keeps the string of his own contradictions taut, with the result that he is in perpetual torment; he rummages in the depths of his own soul trying to find God, and therewith the meaning of life. Yet he is willing to throw all the knowledge thus acquired to the winds of heaven for the sake of the new humanity; and he even discloses to the future man the most treasured secret, the ultimate formula, the most unforgettable truth, namely: "Thou shalt love life more than the meaning of life."

VITA TRIUMPHATRIX

Be it what it may, life is a splendid thing.

GOETHE

How dark is the way through Dostoeffsky's depths, how gloomy is the landscape, how oppressive is the interminable road, how awesomely it resembles the devastating tragedy of his countenance which has been engraved with all the sorrows life holds in store for mortal man! He leads us through the circles of hell that have been sculptured in the human heart, through the purgatorial fires of the soul, and down into the labyrinthine ways of the underworld of the emotions. How tenebrous is this world of man, how much pain lurks in its shadows! His earth is "drenched with tears to its innermost core." His inferno is a darker and drearier place than Dante's. Here we find the souls of those who were victims of their own earthliness, were martyrs to their own feelings, were clasped in the evils of their own passions, were tortured by all the whips of the mind, while they fretted and fumed in impotent rebellion. What a world! Closed to joyousness and hope, and encircled by a wall so high and strong that all prospect of a rescue is debarred. Can no compassion save these poor souls from the abyss of their own selves? Will no apocalyptic hour arrive to shatter this hell which a son of God created out of his own misery?

Tumult and plaint arise from the pit, and never have

men's ears been assailed by a more lamentable sound. Never has man created a work more full of darkness and despair. Even Michelangelo's figures are less horrid while they lament; and above the gloom of Dante's inferno, paradiso shines serene and clear. Is life really such a nightmare? Is pain in truth the meaning of life? It is terrible to peer into this chasm, to watch the suffering, and to hear the lamentation of our brethren.

But a word arises from these dark depths, softly spoken and yet dominating the clamour. It comes to us like a dove winging her flight across a stormy sea. It is pregnant with meaning, a holy word: "Friends, do not fear life." The tumult is hushed, and a clear voice speaks: "Only by suffering can we learn to love life."

Who utters these consoling words? Dostoeffsky himself, the sufferer of sufferers. His hands are still nailed to the cross of his inner contradictions, but now he kisses the cruel tree of life, and his lips are gentle as they disclose the secret to his fellow-sufferers: "I believe we must first of all learn to love life."

And as he speaks the words, the hour of deliverance strikes. The grave gives up its dead, and the prison its captives; all hasten to become the apostles of his word. They come from the prisons, from the Siberian katorga with chains clanking round their feet, from drinking booths and brothels and monastic cells; all those who suffered the passion of their passions. Their hands are bloody, their backs are striped with the lash of the knout, they are still crippled by anger and bent beneath the load of their infirmities; yet complaints no longer issue from their mouths, and their eyes glisten with tears of confident hope. Again we witness the miracle of Balaam; curses turn to blessings on their

lips, for they hear the Hosanna of their master, the Hosanna "which has passed through the fires of despair." The darkest souls are in the front rank; the saddest and the most faithful believers press forward to bear testimony to the word. And they join in a great chorus to sing the Hymn of Suffering, the Hymn of Life. None are missing: there is Dmitri Karamazoff, the guiltless man who was condemned; his hands still bear the manacles as he chants with the full power of his lungs: "I have such strength in me now that I feel I shall overcome all suffering, if only I may be able to say to myself and repeat every minute: 'I am!' Though tormented with a thousand agonies, still: 'I am!' On the rack: 'I am!' Even when tied to the post of execution: 'I exist!' Whether I see the sun or not, I know that it is there. And to know that the sun is there—is not this a whole life in itself?" Here, too, is Ivan, Dmitri's brother, who, stepping to his side, announces: "There is only one irremediable misfortune: to be dead." The ecstasy of existence pierces his heart like a ray of light as he, the denier of God, exclaims joyfully: "I love you, O God; for life is great." Who is this arising from a coffin, his hands folded meekly on his breast? It is Stefan Trofimovich, the everlasting doubter, saying: "Ah, that I might live my life once more! Every minute, every second, must be felicity." The voices grow increasingly clear and pure and more sublime. Prince Myshkin, upborne on the wings of his soaring senses, stretches wide his arms, and sings inspired: "I cannot understand how one can pass a tree and fail to be happy that it exists and that one is able to love it. How many wonderful things we encounter at every step we take in this life, things that even the most abject of men must find marvellous to behold." Father Zosima declares: "Those who

curse God and curse life are really cursing themselves. . . . If you will only love each thing, the secret of God will be revealed unto you; and in the end you will embrace the whole world in the magnitude of your love." Even the poor little nameless creature from the slum street is there to tell us: "Life is beauty; there is meaning in pain alone; oh how lovely is life!" The "queer fellow," awakening from his dream, is determined "to live and—to preach!" Like worms they crawl from the interstices of their own being to join in the great chorale. None wishes to die, none wishes to leave life the holy beloved, none considers the suffering so great as to wish for the relief that could be given by death the arch-enemy. And suddenly the hymn of destiny re-echoes from the hard walls of this hell of despair, and the fires blaze up in thankfulness. Light, unending light, streams in: Dostoeffsky's heaven opens above the earth, and the last words he ever wrote reverberate in the firmament, the cry of the children after the speech beside the big stone, that holy and barbaric cry: "Hurrah for Karamazoff"—meaning "Hurrah for Life!"

O Life, how wonderful you are that you create martyrs for yourself, martyrs who, knowing what is before them, yet go to their martyrdom singing a hymn of praise as they go: O Life, wise and awful one, who through sufferings innumerable makes thralls out of the greatest among men so that in the end they may proclaim your triumph. Adown the ages the cry of Job is heard, for he was sore afflicted by God, and therefore, O Life, you will ever hearken to his lamentation anew. And the song of the Three Holy Children in the fiery furnace is sweet in your ears. You place red-hot coals upon the tongues of the poets, that they may be your servants and name your name in love.

You strike Beethoven with deafness that he may the better listen to the music of God, and that when death is already knocking at his door he may intone his hymn of joy. You hunt Rembrandt into poverty, that he may seek light, primal light, and convey it to his canvas. You scourge Dante into banishment, that in a dream he may see both heaven and hell. All, all have been chased by you down the everlasting ways. And this Russian, whom you have scourged as none other, you have forced to become your slave, and lo, from his foam-flecked lips he jubilantly shouts his Hosanna, a holy Hosanna that has passed through the fires of despair.

You are the conqueror of the men who suffer through you. You turn night into day, pain into love, and from the pit of hell you conjure forth a hymn of praise. For the wisest man is likewise the man who suffers most; he who knows you cannot but bless you. And this great Russian who knew you better than any before or since, lo, he has borne witness to you as none other, and has loved you more abundantly than they.

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S0-EHX-784

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